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Joe Phenix's Double Deal;

Or, THE DIAMOND DAGGERS.

By ALBERT W. AIKEN.



"IT IS, INDEED, A RARE AND BEAUTIFUL WEAPON," THE MAN-HUNTER REMARKED.

Joe Phenix's Double Deal;

OR,

THE DIAMOND DAGGER.

A STORY OF THE QUEEN CITY OF THE OHIO.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF THE "JOE PHENIX" NOVELS, "THE FRESH OF FRISCO" TALES, "DICK TALBOT" SERIES, AND "THE LONE HAND" ROMANCES.

CHAPTER I.

A LEGACY OF HATE.

ON a pleasant night in the latter part of the month of May, in the year—well, the year is not material, but the time of which we write was not long ago—the full round moon shone, bright and beautiful, upon that delightful suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio, known as Walnut Hills.

In the distance gleamed the lights of the Queen City, and from the chimneys of its great manufactories the flame-colored smoke was pouring.

In this pleasant suburb there are many elegant mansions, surrounded by handsome gardens, the residences of the wealthy citizens of Cincinnati.

One place in particular always commanded the admiration of strangers, although, from the peculiar way in which it was arranged, it was not possible for the passer-by to get much of a view.

The mansion was a superb graystone structure, built after the fashion of one of the old-time feudal castles.

A couple of acres of grounds surrounded the house, replete with flowers, shrubbery, ornamental trees, statues and fountains.

But the remarkable thing about the property was the wall which entirely surrounded it.

This wall was of brick, a good eight feet high, and at the top was surmounted by a triple line of iron spikes, curiously curved, and resembling gigantic fish-hooks.

And it is safe to say that, if any one attempted to climb over the wall, these fish-hook-like spikes would be certain to inflict severe damage.

The entrance to the grounds was through massive iron gates, also surmounted by curved spikes.

By the gates was a porter's lodge, and a gigantic dog, a thoroughbred mastiff, chained to an ornamental dog-house, held watch and ward.

These gates were always kept closed, and it was evident that the occupant of the property did not intend that any one should gain entrance without undergoing inspection.

The city clocks had just chimed eleven as two men came along the street in front of this princely place.

One was short and stockily built, a bullet-head fellow, with a face which bore a resemblance to the countenance of a bull-dog.

Clad in a rough, ill-fitting suit, any experienced police officer, at the first glance, would have pronounced him to be an English crook.

His companion was tall and thin, an older man, with a peaked face; not a bad-looking person, although to a good judge of character, the retreating chin, and the shifting, uncertain eyes, would imply that he was a person who would bear watching.

Two well-known characters the twain were, to the police of Chicago and New York, for they had been before the courts in both cities.

Thomas Powland, the short fellow was named. Tommy, the Rat, his associates called him. He pretended to be a pugilist, and had figured in a dozen or so of contests, but he was not up to the work of sportsmen of his weight, who had made a "record."

Then, too, he was such a tricky, unprincipled rascal that he could not be depended upon to "put up a square fight," to use the ring vernacular; he was always ready to make a trade with his opponent and sell the fight if he could get money enough.

The police, repudiating his claim of an honest fighting-man, declared him to be a dyed-in-the-wool crook—a house-breaker, ready to

"crack a crib" on any and every occasion that was fixed on by his pals.

His associate was known as Jeremiah Dalston—also an Englishman, who, although both suspected and accused of crooked work, yet had managed to escape punishment, being very shrewd and very sly.

Few of the "crooked" fraternity are without a nick-name, so Dalston was known to his confederates as Slim Jerry.

Usually crooks confine themselves to particular lines. The pickpocket seldom attempts to do anything but pick pockets, the burglar devotes himself to house-breaking, the bunco man to the confidence business, but Slim Jerry was an all-around "operator"—ready to go into any game which promised a thieves' success.

He had a soft, wheedling, insinuating way, and with his smooth face, and wily manners, often succeeded in producing a good impression even upon old and experienced men of the world.

The two had just arrived from Chicago.

In the "Windy City" they had succeeded in doing a little house-breaking job which netted the pair an even thousand dollars, but crooks of this kind never keep their money; it is "ill got, ill gone."

Not one rascal out of a hundred but is an inveterate gambler; therefore, in a couple of weeks the pair did not have fifty dollars left.

Then Slim Jerry suggested a trip to Cincinnati, saying that he knew a crib there which would pay richly for the cracking, if the scheme could be worked.

When the pair came to the gates they halted and looked in at the roomy residence.

There were lights in a dozen different windows, showing that the inmates had not yet retired for the night.

"Is this the crib?" Tommy asked, in a cautious tone.

"Yes, it is; a fine place, eh?"

"Ay, ay, but it doesn't seem to be a blooming easy one to get at," the crook averred, as he surveyed the spikes on the top of both gates and wall.

And just as he uttered the words, the huge mastiff made his appearance.

The dog came out of a clump of bushes, about half way between the gate and the mansion, proceeded to the carriage-way and then walked with slow, majestic steps toward the house.

"My heyes!" exclaimed the Englishman, who had a fashion of misplacing his h's once in a while. "Just look at that bleeding dorg, will you? Why, if he ain't as big as a cow I wish I may be blowed!"

"Yes, he is a fine brute," the other admitted; "but let us walk on, for in case the dog gets his eyes on us he might kick up a row."

"You can bet your blooming life on that!" the Englishman ejaculated, emphatically, as the two proceeded up the street.

"And I say, old pal, what chance do you think two duffers like you and me stand to get at a crib when a dorg like this 'ere one is a-promenading like a lord around the 'ouse?"

"Oh, I have taken the dog into consideration. I knew the brute was here."

"You did, hey?"

"Yes, and so I am not surprised by his appearance."

"And you have got some plan to fix him?"

"Yes, of course."

"A little p'isoned meat, I s'pose?"

"Oh, no; this dog is too well fed, and too highly educated to fall into a trap of that kind. You might throw a dozen pieces of the finest steak a butcher ever cut, into the grounds, and you wouldn't catch that beast touching 'em."

"He has been educated not to, hey, the blooming brute?" the Rat exclaimed in admiration.

"Yes; in the first place he has all he wants to eat, and, in the second, when a puppy, he was trained not to touch meat which he found lying around. You see, I know all about the canine, for I was the butler here when he came."

"You don't mean it!" the Englishman exclaimed in wonder.

"Yes, it is a fact. That was only about three years ago. You see, I was a butler at home, in England, and had some good places,

too, so I understand my business; but I got to drinking, and then very naturally slipped into crooked work.

"And that wound you hup, hey?"

"Just so. I got into trouble and was obliged to get out between two days, as the saying is, so I came to this tramping-ground for foreign sports; but I didn't dare to stay in New York, for fear I might be spotted and nabbed, so I came to this city."

"And here, in an hour after I got off the cars, I met an old friend who had known me when I was in good circumstances at home."

"This man was butler in this very house, but was going back to England, so he offered to recommend me, not knowing, you know, that I had been in any trouble."

"Yes, yes; I see."

"I got the place, all right. The owner is a man named Stephen Carmanage, a retired distiller, who has made two or three millions of dollars out of whisky, and lives like a prince, keeps an elegant establishment, has a lot of silver, too—good solid stuff, you know."

"Jest what we want, hey?" suggested the Rat, with a grin.

"I was only in the house three months, for I was fool enough to get drunk one day, and when I am in liquor I'm inclined to have an ugly tongue, so I sassed the boss—he had just come in from riding, and, as he is a muscular old chap, he wore out a whip on my back and then kicked me off the place."

"Hard lines, old pal!" the other exclaimed, with a sympathetic shake of the head. "I don't know how you feel about such a thing, but if a man laced my back with a whip I would have blooming good satisfaction out of him—something more'n silver and jewels."

"Oh, I bear him a legacy of hate, and shall get square by making off with his silver. I would like to stick a knife in him, you understand, but the game is too risky," Slim Jerry declared.

CHAPTER II.

A CUNNING TRICK.

By this time the pair had reached the street which ran in the rear of the Carmanage estate.

There were only a few small houses in the neighborhood, and as they were all dark, it was apparent that the occupants kept good hours.

The two turned the corner, following the line of the brick wall.

"Of course I have a plan in my head," Slim Jerry remarked, "for I made up my mind as soon as I was kicked out to go for the old curmudgeon's silver just as soon as I could arrange the matter."

"If you notice, there are no houses in the middle of the block—only an old, deserted stable, and opposite to the stable is a door in the wall," Slim Jerry continued.

"I don't know why it was ever put there, for it is never used. It is fastened by a good lock, but an ordinary skeleton key will open it all right. I tried the experiment one day, thinking, you see, that I might want to use that very door, some time."

"A wise move, old pal!" with an approving nod.

"Now the little game which I propose to play is a simple one. There is the old stable, in the right spot for cover. We can climb to the loft, and so get a view of the house, and when the lights are out, showing that the people have gone to bed, I will cross the street, unlock the door and open it wide—it opens inward—then attach to the knob a strong cord, which I have in my pocket, and carry the end up to the loft."

"After this is done, and I am in the loft again, we will commence and bark like dogs."

"Ah, yes, and I can do a neat trick on that line, too!" the Rat assented, with a grin.

"My idea is that the mastiff will be attracted by the noise, and the chances are big that he will come through the door to find out who is making the disturbance."

"I see, I see! and as soon as the beast gets on the outside, you pull the string, the door shuts, and mister dorg is on the street."

"Yes, and the chances are that he will then wander off, to enjoy a little liberty."

"You are right! It is dollars to cents that the beast will be glad to take a stroll."

"Old Carmanage generally goes to bed about eleven, and by midnight all in the house ought to be in bed," Slim Jerry remarked.

"Then we must allow an hour or two for them to get sound asleep."

"Of course, but we will begin on the dog about twelve."

By this time the pair had arrived at the old stable, which they entered.

It was a small building, about twenty feet square, and in a very bad condition.

On one side the boards had been ripped off, thus allowing the rays of the moon to flood the interior of the structure with light so the pair were able to look around them.

There was a lot of rubbish, old boards and boxes, stuck in one corner, with the remains of some wagons.

"We can get up into the loft without any trouble," Slim Jerry remarked after they had examined the surroundings.

"Oh, yes, that is dead easy!" the Englishman exclaimed.

Up into the loft then the two went, and proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible.

As Slim Jerry had said, from the elevated position they got a good view of the Carmanage mansion, and watched the lights disappear one by one.

At half-past eleven only one light was visible.

"That is in the front entry and is always kept burning all night," Slim Jerry explained.

This is a nice quiet street for a little game of our kind," the Rat remarked, as the midnight hour approached. "Not a soul has passed since we have been here, and I don't suppose there's a blooming policeman within a mile."

"The beats are long ones; so the police service does not amount to much."

Soon the strokes of the midnight bells sounded on the air; whereupon Slim Jerry descended to the ground, stole across the street, unlocked the door, fastened the cord to the knob, opened the door, and then retreated to the old shed again.

"Now then we will try the blooming dog act," the Rat announced with a grin.

By this time the moon had risen so high in the heavens that the rays no longer came in through the broken side of the shed, but there were holes enough in the roof to let the light in so the pair could have a clear view of the interior.

The Englishman had not boasted unduly when he declared that he could give a good imitation of a dog's barking.

The trick succeeded, for the Rat had not yelped like an angry cur for more than half a minute when the big mastiff came bounding through the doorway into the road, the hair on his back upraised, evidently anxious for a skirmish.

With a tug at the cord, Slim Jerry shut and latched the door behind the brute.

The dog had halted in the center of the road and was looking around for the animal who had made the disturbance.

The brute was clearly puzzled, for the imitation of the bark had been so good that the beast was completely deceived.

A few moments he devoted to looking around, then sniffed the air for a moment, uttered a low growl which plainly indicated that he was extremely dissatisfied, and came toward the shed.

"The beast has smelt us out," the Briton whispered in the ear of his companion.

"It does not matter; he can't possibly get at us," Slim Jerry assured.

But when the dog reached the middle of the shed he halted for a moment, threw up his head, sniffed the air, then went to the rubbish pile in the corner and growled in an ugly way.

"There's a rat, or something in the vermin line, in the corner, but the dog will not be able to get at it," Slim Jerry remarked.

"There's a rat up 'ere, too, and you can bet your blooming life that he won't get a chance to put them beastly teeth of his'n in this 'ere precious carcass," whispered his pal, grinning with delight at his joke.

The dog growled half a dozen times, pawed at the rubbish heap as though he had a mind to dig into it, but the heavy boards resisted his efforts.

Then he gave a parting growl and marched out of the shed into the street.

Another dog barked, not a great distance away.

The mastiff regarded this as a challenge, so he immediately barked in return and then set off at a gallop up the street.

"It is all right, my tulip!" the Rat exclaimed. "The blooming beast is hout of the way, and we can get into the crib without any trouble."

The pair at once descended from the loft, crossed the street and went through the door.

Then there was a movement in the rubbish heap.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF THE FEUD.

At the time when the two crooks peered in at the gates at the Carmanage mansion, the curtains of the lower windows, through which the light came, were tightly drawn, but had the shades of the sitting-room been up, the pair could have seen that Stephen Carmanage, the retired whisky-king, and owner of this magnificent estate, sat in the apartment.

After the English fashion, he was in the habit of taking a luncheon, with a generous supply of wine, before going to bed.

Just after the servant placed the tray upon the table, Miss Blanche Carmanage, the whisky-king's niece, and supposed heir, entered the room to bid her uncle good-night.

Uncle and niece bore a great resemblance to each other.

Carmanage was a man of sixty, of massive build and muscular form.

He had a good face, with bold and expressive features, wavy, iron-gray hair, which he wore rather long, and a heavy beard of the same hue, giving him the appearance of one of the grand old Roman fathers.

The niece was, also, large in stature, a buxom, well-developed girl, who, if she could not exactly be called a beauty, yet was good-looking, and, if the expression upon her face did not belie her character, possessed an exceedingly amiable disposition.

"Sit down and have a glass of wine, Blanche. I want to have a little talk with you," the uncle said, filling out a couple of glasses of wine as he spoke.

"Certainly, uncle," the girl replied, taking a seat on the other side of the table.

"Blanche, you are getting to be a woman now, I see," the old gentleman remarked, in a peculiar, abrupt way; "but I have been so accustomed to considering you only as a child that I have not really taken note of the flight of time."

"Oh, yes; I am eighteen now," the girl responded.

"Yes, I suppose you will soon be thinking of getting married," the uncle continued, in a careless way, yet his keen eyes rested searchingly upon his niece's face.

The girl laughed, then blushed a little, and appeared to be slightly confused.

"Well, uncle, I will get married one of these days," she remarked. "It is the destiny of a woman, you know, but I can assure you I am not at all in a hurry to leave you."

"I am glad to hear you say that, my child, for ever since you came under my protection, a little, wee tot, too young to know the difference between a father and an uncle, I have striven to do all in my power to make your life happy."

"And you have, uncle!" the girl exclaimed, impulsively. "As far as you are concerned, you have not left undone a single thing which could add to my happiness. You could not have treated me better if you had been my own father, and I have never known what it is to miss him."

"Well, there is one thing which must be said, and that is—you have always been a good girl," the old gentleman confessed; "so it has really been a pleasure for me to do all in my power for you, and I can truthfully say that you have always been as dear to me as if you were my daughter instead of my niece."

"Oh, yes, I do not doubt about that, for you have always acted in that way."

"As I said, a moment ago, it was not until recently that I got my eyes open to the fact that my little girl had arrived at a mar-

riageable age; but when I saw half a dozen young gentlemen all eager to gain your smiles, I suddenly came to the conclusion that it was likely I might have to make up my mind to be content without my niece in the near future."

The girl laughed, blushed again and cast down her eyes.

"Of course, it is only reasonable such a thing should happen, it is the course of nature, and I am not unreasonable enough to wish to keep you; but at the same time I hope you will have confidence enough in your old uncle to tell me frankly if you have any thoughts of getting married, so that I may have an opportunity to pass an opinion upon the gentleman of your choice."

"Oh, yes, uncle; you can depend upon my telling you just as soon as I have any serious thoughts on the subject," the girl assured.

"I am a pretty good judge of mankind, for I have seen a great deal of the world, and I think I will be able to give you good advice."

"No doubt of that, and I will gladly confide in you."

"You are placed in a position which renders you particularly attractive to the average man," the old gentleman added; "the world knows that I am a man of large wealth, and, as is usually the case, my estate is overestimated, but I am well above the million line."

"It is generally supposed that the bulk of my property will descend to you, and I don't mind saying to you, Blanche, that these guesses are not far out of the way, but I shall take care to arrange the matter in such a manner that, if my little girl should make a mistake in choosing a husband, and happen to be unlucky enough to become the wife of a man who does not know how to take care of money, her estate cannot be squandered."

"A very good idea indeed, it seems to me, uncle."

"And you will not feel hurt if I arrange the matter in that way?"

"Oh, no; I would greatly prefer it," the girl declared. "You see, I know that I am not a bright and shining light as a financier, and it would take a deal of weight from my mind," she continued with a laugh.

"And now, my dear Blanche, it is my duty to reveal to you something of our family history, for there is a dark page in our record, and the time has come for you to learn the particulars."

The girl was surprised by the unexpected disclosure and looked inquiringly at her uncle.

"I have kept the matter from you as long as I could, but as you have arrived at a marriageable age, it is fit you should know the facts."

"The story goes back a great many years," Mr. Carmanage continued—"back to the first settlement of Texas. After the close of the war with Mexico, when Texas became one of the United States, my father, with his family, emigrated from Georgia and took up a plantation on the Colorado River in Texas."

"In the neighborhood resided a family named Rosaire. My father and the head of the Rosaire family quarreled in regard to a cattle transaction."

"The trouble led to a hostile meeting, and Rosaire was killed in the encounter."

"It was dreadful, wasn't it?" the girl exclaimed with feeling.

"Oh, yes; but Texas was on the frontier, in those days, and when trouble occurred between two men, they usually settled it by an appeal to arms."

"Rosaire fell in a fair fight, and my father thought that settled the matter; but the man was of French-Italian descent, a Corsican, and had three sons, ranging from the boy of twelve to a youth of eighteen; so my father was soon informed that he must be on his guard, for these boys intended to kill him at the first convenient opportunity without giving him a chance for his life. They had resolved to introduce the Corsican vendetta into America, you see."

"I have read of that dreadful custom!" Blanche exclaimed, now full of interest.

"My father was disposed to believe that it was the vain boasting of boys, smarting over the loss which they had sustained; but,

anxious to get at the truth of the matter, he sent word to the Rosaire that it was hardly fit for him, a man grown, to encounter children.

"He had three sons, though, of about the same age as the Rosaire boys, and they would be willing to meet them in mortal combat.

"But, this was not the Corsican way; they did not want a fair fight. The offer was declined; so the three Rosaire boys bided their time; and finally they ambushed my father one night and mortally wounded him."

"Oh, wasn't that horrible! and so cowardly, too! Blanche exclaimed.

"The Rosaire thought it was all right, for it was the custom of their country.

"On his death-bed my father told us that, since the vendetta had begun, there was no doubt in his mind it could only end with the extinction of our family or of the Rosaire; and although he thought it was a barbarous custom, yet, under the circumstances, there was naught for us to do but to kill or be killed."

"Oh, yes; I suppose that was necessary, in self-defense!

"So, to use the Westernism, we Carmanage boys went 'gunning' for the Rosaire, and we got them too," the old man remarked, with a deepened voice. "My elder brother, though, fell in the fight, so that your father, John Carmanage, and myself, were all that were left of our race, for there were no girls in the family, and our mother had died before we left Georgia.

"Of the Rosaire family the wife of the man who fell by my father's hand alone remained.

"Ah, poor woman!" Blanche remarked, with a mournful shake of the head; "how dreadfully she must have suffered!"

"Yes; she was a feeble creature, and the shock proved too much for her reason; she became insane."

"Oh, wasn't that awful!" the girl ejaculated, in a tone full of compassion.

"Yes, both your father and myself were very much affected by the circumstance, because we felt that, in a certain measure, the sad occurrence was due to our acts."

"Well, that is true, of course, yet I do not see how you could have acted differently, if it was either kill or be killed. It was very dreadful, of course, but neither you nor my father was to blame. It was the Rosaire who forced the quarrel," the girl argued.

"That is the way we regarded the matter, and about everybody in the neighborhood held the same view; but there was widespread sympathy for the unfortunate woman when she was carried to the asylum."

"Oh, yes, of course."

"After this tragedy, the plantation became distasteful both to your father and myself, so we disposed of it. Your father went into business in New Orleans, while I came North to Cincinnati.

"Time passed; your father and myself both prospered; he married, and you were born.

"Then, when you were about four years old, your father was struck down by the hand of an assassin, and the murderer left behind him a card on which was written:

"This is the work of the last of the Rosaire!"

"Oh, wasn't that dreadful!" cried Blanche, excitedly, with tear-dimmed eyes.

"Yes; I set on foot an investigation, employing the best detectives to be had, and learned that the elder Rosaire had been secretly married in New Orleans to a Creole girl, whom he had not dared to bring home, because his father had picked out a wife for him.

"He had confided the secret to his mother, though, who, after some ten years had come out of the asylum, cured, but she had disappeared, no one knew where.

"It was my idea that she sought out her son's wife, of whom the detectives could find no trace, and the two women told the story of the vendetta to the child as it grew up, and urged him to kill the men who had slain his father."

"It is very probable that you have hit upon the truth, for I have read of just such things," the girl observed, thoughtfully.

"For a full year I kept the detectives on

the alert, but they could not discover the assassin!

"I waited in New Orleans for a couple of months, taking care to have my presence in the city announced in all the newspapers, and making a point of being seen in the public places, for I wanted to give the 'Last of the Rosaire' a chance to attack me," the old gentleman declared, with sparkling eyes.

"I went armed, and I had no doubt but what I could settle the cowardly murderer if he would only pluck up courage enough to attack me.

"I was not troubled, though, so I finally had to return to my home here, bringing you with me.

"It was my idea that, in time, the assassin might attack me, but I have never been troubled, and so I suppose I will die in my bed, after all."

"It is a dreadful story, but, of course, it was only right for me to know it," Blanche remarked, much affected.

"Yes, but now run off to bed, for I have kept you up after your usual hour for retiring."

The girl kissed the old man and departed. Carmanage finished his lunch, drinking freely of the wine.

Deeply engaged in thoughts of the past, sleep came upon him as he sat in his cozy chair.

The minutes slipped swiftly away, and the millionaire dozed on, unconscious that a stranger had come with noiseless steps into the room!

CHAPTER IV.

A DESPERATE YOUTH.

ABOUT nine o'clock on the same evening that the two cracksmen were "prospecting" in the neighborhood of the Carmanage mansion, on Walnut Hills, a tall, well-built, resolute-looking man, well dressed, and with that indelible air about him which betokens one used to command, was promenading slowly down Fifth street.

From the way he was gazing in the shop-windows, and surveying the surroundings, the guess might be hazarded that he was a stranger; and this guess was correct.

The personage was the famous New York detective, about the most marvelous man-hunter of the great metropolis. He been summoned to Cincinnati by one of the prominent bankers of the city.

Arriving about seven that evening, he had secured his hotel accommodations, got his supper, and then took a walk to note the changes which had taken place since his last visit to the "Paris of America," ten years before.

When he arrived at Central avenue he paused to watch the motley throng passing along that thoroughfare.

The veteran thief-taker had eyes like a hawk, and had hardly halted, and cast a glance around, when he noticed a person on the other side of the street who was acting in a suspicious manner.

It was a young man, scarcely more than a youth in appearance, and who looked like a foreigner, for he had an olive complexion, rather small, but clearly cut features, with a diminutive mustache, black as jet, and crispy, curling hair of the same hue.

He was dressed in a foreign fashion, too, wearing top boots, and a blue-flannel suit with an odd little cap.

The coat was cut after a peculiar style, and was belted tightly in at the waist.

In his hand he carried a light switch which, ever and anon, he tapped impatiently against his leg.

This young fellow had partially concealed himself in a doorway, and every now and then emerged from it, casting a glance down the street as though on the watch for some one.

"Now, then, what game is that young man up to?" Joe Phenix asked himself, as he made his way up Central avenue to a convenient doorway so as to be able to keep a watch upon the fellow.

For a good five minutes the veteran kept his eyes on the youth, and then he murmured:

"That young man will bear watching, for, if he isn't meditating some piece of deadly mischief, then I have no skill in reading faces.

"I don't think it will do any harm for me to keep my eyes on him, so as to see just what he is going to do."

The young man was so intent upon watching the people coming up the street that he never cast his eyes across the way; so Joe Phenix was not in any danger of being discovered.

Suddenly the young foreigner darted back into the doorway.

"Aha! something has either alarmed him, or he has caught sight of the parties he is after," the man-hunter decided, taking a new interest in the matter.

Soon he saw that the supposition was correct, for up the street came a couple, a lady on a gentleman's arm—a pretty, delicate-featured girl, who bore a strong resemblance to the young man concealed in the doorway!

"I should not be surprised if they were brother and sister," Joe Phenix inferred, quick to detect the resemblance.

The gentleman with the girl was a good-looking young man with regular features, dark hair and side whiskers.

He was well dressed, swung a light umbrella in his hand, and was chatting with his companion, as they proceeded.

"From the affectionate way in which they look at each other I should judge they are lovers," the detective inferred; "and now I conclude that it is the old story: the girl likes a man whom the brother does not approve of, and he is lying in wait to kick up a row."

But, the young man did not spring out, as Joe Phenix anticipated he would, when the pair approached the doorway, where he had concealed himself; on the contrary, he shrunk into the gloom of the entry within; but, after the couple passed on he came out, and, in a stealthy way, followed in their footsteps.

Phenix got a good view of his countenance as he performed this movement.

"Hello! There is murder written on that man's face!" the veteran had to decide. "I must follow him!"

With Phenix to decide was to act, and so he crossed the street and tracked the young man just as he was tracking the pair.

Up Central avenue the "procession" proceeded; first the young couple, chatting blissfully, unconscious of danger, then the spy, and then the detective.

Half a dozen blocks up the street the couple walked; then they entered an old-fashioned tenement building.

On the upper story they unlocked a door and entered a room.

The spy, following closely, watched at the keyhole, and, as soon as a light was lit, he dashed into the room, drawing a heavy revolver.

The amazed and frightened girl fell upon her knees, while the young gentleman started in alarm, and half raised his umbrella as if to defend himself from the threatened deadly attack.

"Oh, Alexander, my brother, do not commit murder!" the young woman cried, raising her hands in supplication.

Phenix, now in the entry without, hidden from view, was an attentive listener.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXPLANATION.

"ALEXANDER—your brother?" exclaimed the young man, evidently very much surprised.

"Yes, I am her brother, you villain! and now I will have your life!" the youth cried.

But, as he was about to spring upon the other, Joe Phenix suddenly made his appearance, grasped the young man's arm, and, with a sudden twist, took the revolver from him.

The youth turned, wild with rage, and was about to precipitate himself upon the newcomer when Phenix held up his hand, and, with that stern gesture of command which many a time had checked the onset of desperate and determined criminals said commandingly.

"Pause! Do not be rash. Take time to reflect upon what you are about to do."

The youth hesitated.

"I don't know who you are," the detective continued, in his impressive way. "In fact, you are all strangers to me, but when I saw your face in the street a few minutes ago, it struck me that you were in that state of mind which does not hesitate to commit murder, so I followed you, and, luckily, arrived in time to save you from the commission of an act which, had you committed, you would have regretted for many a long day."

"You do not understand the circumstances or you would not speak in that way," the young man replied. "This is my sister whom this villain has lured away from her home, and I would have killed him outright without mercy had I not been fool enough to take an unloaded revolver from my trunk instead of a loaded one. I did not discover the mistake until a few moments ago, and then it was too late to repair the error."

"But, it does not matter," the youth continued, turning to the gentleman, and gazing upon him with a countenance full of rage; "the next time I meet you I will take care that my revolver is loaded, and I will kill you like a dog for the wrong that you have done to this foolish girl!"

The maiden rose to her feet, at this point.

"Oh, Alexander, my brother, do not say such fearful things!" she exclaimed. "You do not know what you are talking about; this gentleman is my own husband!"

"Your husband?" echoed the brother in astonishment.

"Yes, that is the truth," the gentleman assented, in rather a sulky way.

"It is so; I can show you my marriage-certificate!" and the girl hurried to a small trunk, which was in a corner of the room, unlocked it and produced a legal-looking document, which she handed to the youth.

He examined it carefully, and a look of surprise appeared on his features.

"Yes, this is really a marriage-certificate," he admitted.

"Certainly! I am really married to this gentleman. Oh, my brother, how could you think that I would do anything wrong?" the girl exclaimed in a reproachful voice.

"How could I think in any different way under the circumstances?" he asked. "When I went to the island of Cuba I left you here in Cincinnati at a comfortable boarding-house, and knew that you had a good place in a dressmaking establishment, so that you would be sure of getting enough to support you in comfort while I was away."

"Yes, that is true," the girl assented.

"When I returned I found that you had left both your boarding-house and the place where you worked without giving any explanation, or saying where you were going."

"I did not think it was necessary. It was my business, and no one else's," the sister replied.

"Besides, I intended in time to write to you and give a full explanation," she continued. "I did not expect that you would return for two or three months."

"Don't you remember that you said when you went away that, after you got through with Cuba you were going to Mexico, and you would not be likely to return until September?"

"Yes, that was my intention, but the business in Cuba was not good, and so the party concluded to return to New York, giving up the trip to Mexico; then I got an engagement here in Cincinnati; I commence next week," the young man explained.

The husband appeared surprised by this information and looked inquiringly at the girl. She blushed and seemed to be a little confused.

"I suppose I will have to explain now," she said. "I did not really deceive you, Robert, but I will admit that I did not tell you I had a brother."

"If you remember, I said I was an orphan with only a single living relative; but I suppose, from the way in which I spoke, you got the idea that this relative was a distant one."

"Yes, I certainly did," the husband admitted. "And that is why I did not make any inquiries in regard to the matter."

"It was a little bit of foolish pride on my part," the girl explained. "My brother is in the show business, and so many people have such queer ideas about those who are

in that kind of life that I was foolish enough to fear you might be prejudiced against me if I told you all about my brother."

"I know it was wicked in me not to tell, but, at the time, to withhold the truth did not seem to be as bad as telling a lie, although I suppose there isn't much difference between the two," the girl declared, with a sudden outburst.

"You were foolish, indeed, not to tell the truth," the brother asserted; "and, as to my being a *showman*, there is no call for you to be ashamed of that. It is a good, honest business; we work hard for and earn every penny that we get!"

And as he spoke, the youth threw back his head with the air of a man who was not at all afraid to face the world.

"Well, I have no particular prejudice against people in your line of business," the gentleman admitted.

"Of course, I know a great many people do have such a prejudice," he continued.

"In fact, the members of my own family, being strict church members, do not think that those who earn their bread by amusing the public are fit to live, and I have no doubt they would lift up their hands in holy horror if they knew I had married the sister of a stage-performer."

"Yes, that is probably true," the showman assented; "but, I can tell you, sir, that, as far as I am concerned, I am sorry you have wedded my sister, for I think it would be a great deal better for her if she had not married a member of a family who hold such bigoted views," the youth declared, spirit-edly.

"I will admit it is unfortunate, and I would be glad if my people held different opinions; but there is an old saying that the course of true love seldom runs smooth, and it certainly was so in our case," the gentleman explained in a conciliatory tone; "but, as your sister and I loved each other, we did not stop to think whether our relatives would approve of the match or not."

"That is, I did not, for I knew if I allowed my people to know the facts of the case, they would do all in their power to stop the marriage, for my uncle, Robert Elliott, one of the richest men in Chicago, after whom I am named and from whom I have great expectations, has set his heart on my marrying some rich girl."

"And you can readily understand that, if he discovered I had gone contrary to his wishes, and married a girl without money, there would be an awful row."

"I presume so," the brother remarked, with an assenting nod.

"I explained all this to your sister, and told her that I thought it was wise for us to be married quietly, and keep the fact secret for awhile."

"You see, I am in a measure dependent upon this uncle. He has large investments in different parts of the country, and I act as his agent in looking after them."

"He pays me a handsome salary, and it would be very unwise in me to break with him just now. Then, too, my uncle is an old man, in poor health, and liable to die at any moment."

"There is an old adage about it not being wise to wait for dead men's shoes," Joe Phenix observed, at this point, for the first time taking part in the conversation.

"Yes, and I have no doubt it is very true, too, but in the present case it is certain that my uncle cannot live more than a few months longer, a year at the most, and at his death I will be sure to come in for a handsome sum."

"Well, under such circumstances I suppose it was wise for you to conceal the marriage," the youth acquiesced, evidently satisfied with the explanation.

"But you will understand that it was not strange I should jump to the conclusion that something was wrong when I found you, Marguerite, missing, and no one knew anything about you."

"The only clue I could get to your whereabouts was that one of the girls in the boarding-house said she had seen you twice on Central avenue, between Fifth and Sixth streets, accompanied by a young man."

"Of course, I suspected that you had been led away, and immediately determined to find you, if it was possible."

"But you are satisfied now that it is not the truth?" the sister queried.

"Yes, and I am glad to discover that my fears are unfounded, although I must say I do not like this secrecy," the youth declared.

"Under the circumstances it would not be well for me just now to openly introduce your sister as my wife to the world," the husband explained. "I would surely incur my uncle's anger, and then I could not hope to inherit any of his money."

"Well, I don't suppose it would be wise, from that standpoint," confessed the young man, thoughtfully.

"The marriage will not have to be kept secret very long—a year at the most, probably; and, really, as long as we all know there isn't anything wrong, what harm is there in keeping the matter quiet?" the husband urged with an appearance of great frankness.

"That is true," the youth assented; "and I don't suppose I ought to object, so I will say no more about it."

"I presume that you don't mind if I come to see my sister when I have time?"

"Certainly not! On the contrary, I will be glad to have you call whenever it is convenient," the husband assured.

"I am compelled by business to be away all day," he continued, "so that Marguerite is here alone, and when you come you can converse with her to your heart's content."

"Oh, I will be so glad to have you come!" the girl protested. "I get fearfully lonesome here all alone, and if I hadn't secured work at scarf-making I don't know what I would do with myself, for I hate to be idle."

"I will be able to come to-morrow afternoon, I think," the youth announced. "I shall have to be at the Summer Garden during the morning, but in the afternoon there will not be anything for me to do."

"Allow me to return you your pistol," remarked Joe Phenix at this point, presenting the revolver to the young man; "and you will have to pardon me for interfering in this matter, an entire stranger as I am to you all, but my excuse must be that I thought this gentleman was going to do something desperate."

"You were right, and it is a lucky thing you did interfere!" the brother averred.

"All is well that ends well," and the veteran detective turned to depart.

"Hold on a moment! I will go with you!" the youth urged.

Then he kissed his sister, shook hands with the husband and followed Phenix down the stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

ENTRAPPED.

"Do you ever drink anything?" young Delmay asked, after he and the veteran detective reached the street.

"Oh, yes; a glass of beer now and then."

"I will be very happy indeed, to have you join me in one," the youth declared. "I consider that you have done me a great service to-night, and I want to thank you for the same."

"Oh, that is all right," Joe Phenix replied, carelessly.

"I am inclined to be rather hasty, and I was so angry on this occasion that, if it had not been for the fortunate accident of taking an unloaded revolver instead of a loaded one, I most assuredly would have shot my sister's husband without giving him a chance to explain, and, of course, after I had discovered the truth I never would have been able to forgive myself."

"That is undoubtedly correct, and in matters of this kind it would always be well to act on the old motto, 'Be sure are right, then go ahead!'"

"Yes, yes!" the young man assented; "but, let us go in here," he added.

They were opposite the door of one of the handsome saloons of which Cincinnati boasts.

The pair entered, seated themselves at a table and called for beer.

"By the way, I have not introduced myself," the young man remarked. "My name is Alexander Delmay, and I am in the show business, being the proprietor of a troupe of performing dogs, really wonderfully well-trained animals."

"On the programmes I figure as Signor Delmay, the renowned Spanish trainer," the professional continued, with a laugh.

"The American public is composed of a queer lot of jays," he explained, "who run after anything foreign with the idea that it must be a deal better than the native-born article."

"Yes, that is true, I believe."

"I commence an engagement on Monday at Jake Jammerstein's Summer Garden on Vine street. With Jake I remain two weeks, and then I go to a new garden, which has just been started over in Covington, for two weeks more."

"You must come and see my dogs, for, as I said, they are extremely well-trained animals, and do some wonderful tricks."

"I shall be pleased to see them."

The waiter brought the beer, and the pair drank to their better acquaintance.

"You will pardon me sir, I hope, if I speak to you frankly," the young man now observed in a peculiar, abrupt way.

"Certainly! go ahead!"

"You are a stranger to me, and I know absolutely nothing about you, yet I have got the impression that you are a man who has seen a great deal of the world, therefore possess a fund of experience and are well-calculated to advise in a difficulty."

"I presume that I am tolerably well-informed, and I think I may say, without rendering myself liable to be considered egotistical, that I am capable of giving good advice," Joe Phenix returned in his calm, judicial way.

"Well, now then, my dear sir, will you tell me frankly what you think about this secret marriage?"

"Yes, I will, provided you will promise me you will not allow yourself to become excited, but will talk the matter over with calm deliberation."

"Yes, yes!" the dog-trainer exclaimed, quickly. "I will give you my word that I will be patient and reasonable."

"I judge from the way in which you speak that you are inclined to think everything is *not* all right," the youth continued, a grave expression appearing on his face.

"Well, I must admit that I do not like the appearance of things," the veteran replied. "Of course, you understand that I haven't anything to go on but general supposition."

"Ah, yes, I comprehend," and the dog-trainer shook his head in a sober way.

"I am young, have not had a great deal of experience, and do not pretend to be worldly wise, but I must say I have a vague feeling that there is something wrong about this matter, or the man himself."

"I do not think there is a question in regard to the marriage. That is all right."

"Yes, the certificate would seem to show that she was legally married."

"But, there is something about the individual which makes me distrust the story he tells about his wealthy uncle; yet, of course, it may be true," the dog-trainer admitted in a reflective way; "but, true or not, I hate all underhand work of this kind!"

"It may be all right, and then again all wrong; but, I think I can ascertain the truth for you," Joe Phenix assumed. "An investigation of this kind is right in my line, as I am in the detective business."

"Oh, is that so?" asked the youth, evincing great interest.

"Yes, my office is in New York, and my name is Phenix—Joseph Phenix."

"You are not a stranger to me by reputation, Mr. Phenix, for I have read of your exploits in the newspapers."

"Yes, the reporters do their best to write up anything in the detective line when the opportunity comes in their way, and sometimes in their zeal for news, they give criminals such important information that the rascals are able to get away before the detectives get ready to nab them."

"I don't doubt that is the truth. These newspaper men are great hustlers. But, Mr. Phenix, I will be glad indeed if you will investigate this matter and find out if this man has been telling the truth or not, and you need not allow expense to stand in the way, for I can well afford to spend a few dollars."

"You see, I have always been a prudent, saving fellow, and as I get a good salary I have managed to put away quite a little sum of money."

"I do not think the expenses will amount to anything," the detective replied; "and as I have come from New York to this city to attend to a little business in the detective line, it will not be much extra trouble to look after your affair, at the same time."

The dog-trainer expressed his thanks; the two exchanged addresses, finished their beer, and departed.

They proceeded along Fifth street to Vine, and there separated, Delmay going up Vine, while Joe Phenix kept on.

As the detective crossed the street, he came face to face with a young and good-looking woman.

She was small in stature, neatly dressed, and started in surprise when she caught sight of the veteran detective.

"Mr. Phenix!" she exclaimed, coming to a halt in front of the detective as he stepped from the street to the curbstone.

"That is my name, and you are Mrs. Hacker, I believe," said the detective, bowing with as much politeness as though the woman was one of the first ladies in the land instead of being the wife of one of the most daring confidence-men who had ever operated in the United States—William Hacker, the crook was named, but among his pals he was usually termed "Cheeky Hacker," on account of the unusual abilities which he displayed in his peculiar profession.

"Yes, and I am glad that I met you, Mr. Phenix, for I have been desirous of having a talk with you about certain matters," the woman said.

"I am at your service, madam," the veteran assured.

"I am on the square now, you know," the woman continued.

"That is good, and I am sure you will be much better off," was the answer. "Although crooked work may seem to pay for awhile, yet in the long run the man or woman who is unwise enough to believe that rascality pays better than honesty is sure to come to grief."

"I think so, too, and after Billy was convicted and sent up the river I came here to Cincinnati. This was my home before I was married, you see, but as I haven't been here for years I know that if I took my maiden name no one would recognize me as the wife of a convict."

"That is true."

"I am a tailoress by trade, and I was certain I could get plenty of work. I have a room on Plum street. It is not far, and if you will have the kindness to come with me we can talk there without danger of being disturbed."

"Very well; I will go with you if you so wish," Joe Phenix replied.

"I will be very much obliged indeed, if you will."

"Don't mention it."

Then the pair proceeded up Vine to Sixth street, and then down Sixth until Plum street was reached, into which they turned.

After going a few blocks the woman entered the door of a rather mean-looking house.

She led the way to a back room on the third story.

It was meanly furnished.

She took the detective's hat, and bade him be seated while she removed her cloak and hat.

Joe Phenix took a chair.

On the wall opposite was a glass, and in a few moments, by the aid of this glass, the detective was able to see the convict's wife advancing toward him with a dagger in her hand.

"Oho! does she mean to murder me?" the great man-hunter queried to himself, at the sight in the looking-glass.

CHAPTER VII.

A FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

To return to the cracksmen:

"There is a side door which has only an ordinary lock on it and I can easily open it with a skeleton key," Slim Jerry explained

to his companion as they proceeded to the house.

This proved to be the truth, and the pair had no difficulty in gaining admission to the millionaire's mansion.

"The silverware is all kept in a closet, which is guarded by an extra good lock, and one which we can't pick, but by the aid of a gimlet and a saw we can saw the lock out, for the old chap was not up to the dodge of having the door lined with iron so as to put a stop to a saw and gimlet job."

"Oh, well, even the biggest nobs ain't hup to all the tricks, you know," the Rat remarked.

It did not take these expert thieves long to get at the silver.

"Oho! this ere is a tidy bit of swag!" Powland exclaimed in delight as he surveyed the treasures of the silver closet.

"Yes, and it is all good solid stuff, too, mind you!" Slim Jerry asserted; "no plated trash, but the genuine article."

"That is what we want!"

The crooks were provided with a couple of peculiar bags in which to transport their plunder. They were made of black chaise cloth, resembling leather, and so arranged that they could be folded into a small compass, in order that the crooks might conceal them about their clothes, yet when filled with plunder they presented the appearance of common traveling bags.

The idea of this was to prevent anybody whom they might encounter, after cracking a crib, from suspecting from the appearance of their parcels that they had been engaged in robbery.

Soon the property was stored away in the bags.

"Now, then, my tulip, is this hall that we can pick hup?" the Rat inquired—"no chance for any cash or jewelry? A few sparklers in the shape of diamonds wouldn't go bad, you know."

The other shook his head.

"No show, hey?" with a disappointed look.

"Nary! The old man isn't in the habit of keeping any money in the house, and although his niece has some elegant diamonds, yet we couldn't get at them for she keeps them in her room, and there's a little beast of a pug dog there which would be certain to raise the house if we should attempt to get into the room."

"Ah, yes, I hates these blarsted little dorgs!" the Rat averred, with a vicious shake of the head; "many a good job has been spoilt all on account of a yelping cur."

"That is true," Slim Jerry assented; "and if it wasn't for that infernal dog we would stand a chance to pick up five or six thousand dollars' worth of sparklers."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed the English crook, with a doleful shake of the head. "Don't that fairly make your mouth water? And, just to think that we can't collar the boodle all on account of a little beast of a dorg! Isn't it a burning shame?"

"Yes, but the thing is that way, and there is no getting over it. So we will get hout with what we've got, and thank our lucky stars that we are able to make as good a raise as we've."

"I tell you what we can do," suggested Slim Jerry, as a sudden thought struck him. "There is a closet in the sitting-room where the old man used to keep a goodly supply of wines and liquors, for the old fellow is fond of his glass, and we might go and take a drink before we get out."

"A belegant idea!" the Rat asserted, promptly; "and now that you speak of the tippie, it has suddenly come to me that my throat is about as dry as an ash-heap."

"Come along then!"

Slim Jerry conducted his companion into the sitting-room.

"Hello! the light has been left!" Slim Jerry muttered to his companion as the two entered the room.

"So much the better, for it will save us the trouble of turning on the glim," the Rat observed.

Then the two made the unexpected discovery that the millionaire sat in his high backed easy-chair; but, at the second glance, they saw by the pale face and drooping jaw that there was no danger of the old man awakening.

Stephen Carmanage was dead!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INVESTIGATION.

"My heyes! will you look at that?" the Rat exclaimed. "He has kicked the bucket, and is sitting right in his chair, too!"

"I never will have a chance to get square with him for that horse-whipping now," Slim Jerry remarked in a regretful way. "but we'll take a drink of wine, in the first place, and then we will go through him for his valuables."

Slim Jerry proceeded to fill a couple of glasses to the very brim from the decanter on the table.

"Here's looking at you, old chap," the crook continued, as he raised his glass and nodded to his companion.

"The same to you, my tulip!" the Rat responded.

The two tossed off the wine at a single swallow and smacked their lips gleefully.

"I s'pose this 'ere is what they call prime stuff, eh?" the Rat remarked, putting his head on one side and gazing at his glass in a critical way.

"Oh, yes; the old man always made it a point to have the best that money could buy."

"Well, now, I tell you w'ot it is! I don't go much on this wishy-washy stuff! I would rather have a bottle of good gin, than a gallon of wine, any time!"

"I agree with you; wine is no good!" Slim Jerry assented.

Then he happened to glance at the clock on the mantel.

"Hello! it's near two, and we had better be going, so I'll strip the old man."

"Is he in the habit of carrying much wealth around with him?" the Rat asked.

"He usually had a well-filled 'leather'," Slim Jerry replied.

"Then his chain and ticker are worth a couple of hundred," he continued, as he removed the watch and chain from the person of the dead man.

"Oh, yes; it is a helegant establishment," the English crook declared with a chuckle.

Carmanage's pocketbook contained about a hundred dollars, and after the examination was made and the amount announced, the Rat queried:

"I say, pal, doesn't it strike you as being hawful that the old buffer should have kicked the bucket, a-setting 'ere in his chair all alone?"

"Well, he is a tolerably old man, and a high liver; a fellow who was fond of all sorts of fancy dishes, and drank no end of wine and different kinds of liquors, and when the time comes for one of his kind of men to go, their candle of life is apt to be snuffed out mighty quick."

"Yes, I s'pose that you are right about that."

"But let us be off," Slim Jerry now urged. "We have made a tidy haul, and got a nice amount of swag, which I know just where to 'plant' so as to melt it into money."

"You know a blooming 'fence' 'ere in Cincinnati who will put up the cold cash for the swag, and is willing to give us a square deal?"

"Yes. My man is a pretty decent fellow. He runs a pawnbroker's shop and does a good jewelry trade besides; supplies peddlers who travel through the country, and so has a chance to get rid of an enormous lot of swag. And besides, he is a countryman of ours, an English Jew, and as sharp as a steel-trap—always has his melting-pot ready, you understand, and is so quick at a bargain that in ten minutes after we get the swag before his eyes it will be in the pot, and all the fly cops in the world wouldn't be able to identify the stuff."

"That is the game to play!" the Rat assented, gleefully.

Then the two departed, being particular to proceed with the utmost caution.

Both being old hands at this sort of thing, they were not likely to make any mistakes.

They succeeded in getting into the street without any trouble.

By this time the moon was quite low in the sky, and some heavy banks of clouds, which had come up from the eastward, dimmed the rays, so that it was only at intervals that light flooded the earth.

"This just suits us to death!" Slim Jerry averred, with a grim smile.

"Oh, yes, the darker the better!" the other assented.

Fortune favored the two rogues. They gained the city without meeting any policemen, and reached the pawnbroker's establishment without encountering anybody disposed to question them.

The old English Jew who kept the fence, was always ready to receive customers, no matter at what hour they came.

There was a small passage by the side of the store which led to the back yard. The gate which gave entrance to this passage was operated by a spring, and a man who knew how to press the latch in a certain way could open the gate.

As Slim Jerry was an old customer he found no difficulty in gaining admittance.

As he had told his pal, the old fence was prompt at business; so it did not take long to arrange their bargain.

Within fifteen minutes from the time they entered the house the two burglars departed, with a goodly sum of money in their possession.

"Now then, don't let us make such fools of ourselves as we did in Chicago, and go and blow our wealth in at some faro-bank," Slim Jerry advised; "let us salt down the greater part of it—stick it in some bank, you know, and while we are enjoying ourselves on the rest of the boodle, we can be keeping our eyes open for another job."

The Rat thought this was a good idea, and expressed himself to that effect.

"And we will play it on any crooks whom we may meet in the town," Slim Jerry suggested.

"We will make out that we have just arrived in Cincinnati, and are not over and above flush with cash, so we are anxious to get a chance to pull off a good job, and the odds are big that nobody will suspect we had anything to do with cracking this crib."

The Rat agreed that this would be the proper course to pursue, and the couple proceeded to one of the European hotels, where they secured rooms for the night.

It was about half-past six when one of the housemaids in the Carmanage mansion made the discovery that the millionaire was dead.

Great was the commotion.

The family physician was summoned, and after he made an examination of the body he immediately caused a telephone message to be sent to the chief of police. As soon as this was done, he made every person leave the room where the body had been discovered, for, as he explained to Miss Blanche, who was almost prostrated by the sudden death of the uncle to whom she was so greatly attached, this was a case where nothing must be touched or altered until the proper authorities had had time to make an examination.

The young lady accepted the explanation, as a matter of course, but the butler, who was a keen-witted man, wondered at the precaution.

"I don't see why the doctor wanted to call in the police," he confided to a couple of the other servants. "It is a case of sudden death, I know, but the police hav'n't anything to do with a matter of that kind."

But it was more than this, as the doctor proved conclusively to the chief of police when that gentleman arrived.

Stephen Carmanage had been foully murdered!—struck to the heart as he slept in his chair!

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAMP PRINTER.

He was a rather odd and peculiar-looking man, not quite badly enough clothed to be set down for a tramp, and yet he had the shuffling gait and the hang-dog look common to these sons of freedom who "spin not, neither do they toil," although they are certainly not "clad in purple and fine linen."

This individual of whom we write came up Broadway, from the direction of the levee, at just about the same moment, on the same morning that the doctor was sending his hurried call over the telephone to the chief of police.

As the man passed by the door of a saloon, now thrown wide open on account of a general clearing up which was going on, so that a full view of the interior could be had, he looked in at the goodly display of bottles behind the bar, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Thou are so near and yet so far!" he murmured. "My throat is as dry as an ash-heap, and as parched as the great Arabian desert, yet I have not the wherewithal to purchase a single drink!"

"No, sir, not even the price of a solitary beer, and yet I hold within my knowledge a secret which ought to bring me thousands."

Then he shook his head in a regretful way.

"Ah, it was ever thus since the world began. 'To him that hath shall be given,' and the man who hasn't got anything sha'n't get a smell."

The idea that a man of genius, like myself, should be walking the streets of Cincinnati, without being able to raise the price of a beer!

"If palaces could be bought for a nickel apiece, I couldn't buy even a door-knob, and yet I am in possession of information which ought to bring me wealth galore."

"I have been here three days, now, and hav'n't struck a job, nor been greeted by the sight of a friendly face, and the circumstances are such that, though I possess the key which ought to unlock a treasure-box full of golden coins yet I am not the man to do the trick."

"Ah, is it possible that I am ever to be the football of fate, a true fortune's fool?"

At this point the melancholy individual came to Fifth street, and as he turned the corner he came face to face with a man who was about as peculiar-looking in his appearance as he was himself.

The other was evidently a low-grade sport—a gambler, to judge from his looks, or a horseman who picked up a living by following the races.

He was not dressed snabbily, although his clothes were well worn and decidedly out of style, and the broad-brimmed silk hat which he wore, although in good condition, was far removed from the present style.

There was a mutual recognition.

"Why, why! old times rocks! you don't mean to say that it is you, for sure!" the sport exclaimed, speaking with the peculiar intonation common to the men of the Southwest.

"Oh, yes; I am here all right, Scotty!" the seedy-looking man acknowledged—"as the poet says, 'as large as life and twice as natural!'"

"Well, well, I hav'n't seen you for a good ten years—not since the time I met you in New Orleans, and you were working in some newspaper office there, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, the *Picayune*. But I say, Scotty, how are you fixed? Have you got the price of a drink in your pocket? I am just dying for a ball!"

"Say, you ought to go and hire yourself out to some museum as a curiosity—the man who is always dry!" the sport averred, with a laugh.

"I reckon that wouldn't be a bad idea," the seedy fellow admitted, "and there wouldn't be any fake about the thing, either. It would be a sure-enough fact. But, honestly, Scotty, I have got a thirst on me that many a man would be willing to give five dollars to possess."

"Well, as I have been playing in good luck lately, I feel like playing the good Samaritan act," the sport declared. "What do you want to drink?"

"Anything you like!" the other replied, in a tragic way. "Beggars shouldn't be choosers, you know, and I will be glad to take anything I can get, from beer to Mumm."

"How would a little good brandy suit your constitution?"

"Brandy!" exclaimed the seedy chap, clasping his hands together and rolling his eyes upward; "don't mention it! Brandy? Why old pard, it has been so long since I have had a swallow of brandy that I don't believe I remember how the liquor tastes."

"Come along with me, and I will give you a chance to sample some. My room is right around the corner in Broadway. I have a snug little crib, although it isn't remarkable

for its elegance, but it is mighty comfortable. I have some good brandy there, and you are welcome to get away with some of it."

"Scotty, your heart is as big as a bullock's, and although you are extending your hospitality to me on general principles, without a thought of making anything out of the transaction, just going in to ball me off on account of my being an old friend, yet, mebbe, I can throw something good in your way," the seedy man announced in a mysterious manner.

"All right. I will be glad to take anything that comes along!" the sport declared.

Then he led the way to his apartment.

It was a plainly furnished room on the second floor of one of the old-fashioned houses which are so common in that quarter.

That the occupant of the room was a man of sporting tastes was evident from the cheap engravings of noted horses, famous pugilists and theatrical celebrities which hung on the walls.

On the table in the center of the room was a decanter of brandy and a small book.

"Take a chair!" exclaimed the sport as he sat down by the table, and waved his hand toward the decanter.

"There is the brandy—help yourself, but you will have to excuse me from joining you, for it is rather early in the morning for me to go in for that sort of thing; then, I have had my morning cocktail, too, and I don't think that it is wise for a man to commence mixing his liquor so early in the day.

The seedy man did not take a chair, but immediately helped himself to a glass of brandy, and as he raised the glass he exclaimed:

"I am the man, sport, who can give you the chance to make a big stake!"

"All right! I will be glad if you can, but drink hearty, old man!" the gambler invited.

The other disposed of the liquor at a single swallow, then smacked his lips with gusto.

"By George, Scotty, that is about as good stuff as I ever tasted!" he confessed.

"Yes, it is pretty fair tippie. I ain't no millionaire, but when I have liquor around I always make it a point to see that it is good."

The seedy man took a chair.

"Now, Scotty, my boy, I will come right down to business," he declared.

"I have a scheme, sport, which a man like yourself can make big money out of if you want to go into it," the rounder said.

"Well, I am always ready for a speculation, if there is a chance to gather in some coin," said the sport.

"There is a big chance in this thing, as you will see when I explain. A man like yourself can make money out of it, but I cannot, for I can't handle the matter. I am no fool, you know, and I understand just what I can do, and what I can't.

"I will be honest with you and say right out that if I could work the trick myself I wouldn't take you in, nor anybody else; but, as I said, I can't do it. It is out of my line, and if I tried to engineer the thing I would only make a botch of it."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"But you are just the man to put it through," the other asserted.

"Go ahead and explain."

"My name is McMorro—Levi McMorro. I am a printer by trade, and from a peculiar habit of mine of never staying long in one place, I have got the name of the Wandering Jew."

"Ah, yes; Wandering Jew! That's good!" the sport declared.

"But I am no Jew, you know, although I am named Levi," the seedy man explained. "It is an old Biblical name, you understand, and my father had a weakness for names of that kind."

"Yes, yes, I see."

"I am what is called a tramp printer. I go from town to town, and if there isn't any work in a place, the boys in the offices always chip in to help me on to the next city."

"That sort of thing is a kind of unwritten law among the craft."

"I comprehend!" from the gambler;

"about the same idea as the sports staking the man who has gone broke through a run of ill-luck."

"That is the idea. I am an extra good workman, but I can't let liquor alone, and so it is not possible for any one to place any dependence on me.

"You see, I know my failing, and I don't atempt to lie out of it."

"That's right," the sport assented. "When a man knows his own weakness he can generally manage to get along; but, if he believes he is strong where he is weak, then he is in a mighty bad way, and is sure to come to grief."

"But this sort of thing only dates back about ten years. Before that time I was tolerably steady, and ten years ago, in this city of Cincinnati, I married about as nice a looking girl as any man would wish to see."

"Ah, now the story is getting interesting," the sport exclaimed. "But, take a cigar, old man," Scotty urged. "You'll find them in that thing which looks like a book, but it is only a dummy."

The other took the odd cigar-case in his hands, and examined it with curiosity.

"It is a rather strange little article; a German sport gave it to me."

"But go on, old pard, and tell me all about this wife of yours!" Scotty exclaimed.

"Well, there isn't a great deal to tell," the printer replied.

"She was an orphan girl who worked in a millinery shop, and as she was a capital good hand, very clever with ribbons and feathers, and such flummery, she got a good salary and had saved up a few hundred dollars.

"By the way, I will not smoke just now," he remarked, abruptly, replacing the box on the table.

"Well, to go on: after we were married, I didn't do a stroke of work while her money lasted, but in three months it was gone, and then I lit out, too. But my wife is here in this city to-day, and—she has married again!"

CHAPTER X.

A DECEIVED WOMAN.

By the aid of the glass, Joe Phenix was able to see what the woman was doing just as well as though he was facing her.

So he waited until he was certain that she meant to attack him, for he could plainly detect by the glitter of her eyes that she was bent upon doing something desperate, and then suddenly wheeled around.

"Don't try any game of that kind, Mrs. Hacker!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet, grasping the woman by the wrist, and with a sudden twist forcing her to drop the dagger.

"Oh, you are a demon!" the woman cried.

"No, no, nothing of the kind; but sit down and let us talk quietly," the veteran detective replied, forcing the woman into a chair.

"Yes, you are, a perfect demon, and it doesn't seem possible for any one to get the best of you!" the woman exclaimed, in a despairing tone.

"Well, as far as that goes, I certainly have been a pretty lucky man all my life," Joe Phenix remarked, as he resumed his seat.

"But to my thinking the true explanation is that when it came to a contest I was on the right side and my antagonists on the wrong, and it was only natural that I should win."

"And now let me put the direct question to you, why do you want to injure me?"

"Wasn't you the man who sent my husband to prison?" the woman exclaimed, showing signs of breaking down.

"Yes, to a certain extent I am responsible, for I am the man who arrested him, but you must take into consideration the fact that if your husband had not broken the laws, neither I nor any one else could have troubled him."

"To blame me for his arrest and conviction is like a man blaming the fire into which he is unwise enough to thrust his hand."

"I loved my husband dearly," the woman exclaimed, almost in tears.

"And I thought my heart would break

when he was torn from me and sent to prison."

"Yes, that was natural. I can understand just how you felt about the matter, but you ought not to blame me," the detective replied.

"It was your husband's own act which brought him to the prisoner's dock, and finally landed him in Sing Sing prison."

"He blamed you for it all, and at our last meeting he made me swear that I would kill you if I ever got the chance."

"Ah, yes, that is just like the man," Joe Phenix exclaimed, in a tone full of contempt.

"He was anxious that you, a weak, foolish woman, should undertake the scheme of vengeance which he would not dare to perform himself."

"Oh, but he swore to me that if I did not get an opportunity to kill you he would do so as soon as he was released from prison."

"That was only an idle boast, and one which the man would never attempt to make good," Joe Phenix declared.

"And to prove that what I say is correct, let me tell you that your husband was released from jail over a year ago, and yet he has never made the slightest attempt to take vengeance upon me."

The woman was astounded and looked at the detective in utter surprise.

"Why, my husband is dead. I received a letter from one of his old pals, who wrote that he had died in prison, and he had attended to having him buried!" she exclaimed.

"That was only a trick to get rid of you—I am going to tell you the truth about this matter, for I see that you haven't any idea how big a rascal this husband of yours is."

"I do not understand it at all, for I thought he was devoted to me."

"Yes, so he was, as long as you were useful to him; but I will tell you the story, and then you will understand all about the matter."

"Your husband was sent up for ten years, and just as soon as he got to Sing Sing he began to plot and plan to escape."

"He had no idea of forcibly breaking his prison bars; he was too smart for that, for he felt certain that, if he did succeed in escaping, he was sure to be recaptured."

"Being thin and consumptive-looking, he played the sick dodge, and contrived to get a benevolent middle-aged widow interested in him."

"She was a member of a society for the reformation of convicts."

"He played his game so well that he not only made the prison doctors believe that he hadn't a great while to live, but persuaded the widow that he was a thoroughly reformed man, and the woman fairly moved heaven and earth to secure his release."

"Is it possible?" the wife exclaimed, hardly knowing what to say.

"And in his letters he never said a word to me about the matter."

"He did not want you to know, for he had a scheme which he desired to carry out if he succeeded in gaining his release."

"This benevolent widow had money, and as he had succeeded in making a complete fool of her, he thought he would be able to marry her if he could only get out of jail."

"Oh, this is too dreadful!" the woman exclaimed, her eyes beginning to sparkle with angry fires.

"I knew that he was mean and deceitful, to other people, but I did not believe that he would attempt to deceive me!"

"I am telling you the exact truth!" the detective declared.

"The widow succeeded in procuring your husband's release, and it was his dodge to get a pal to write you that he was dead, so as to keep you quiet."

"Three months after his release he married the widow, and in another month managed to get hold of the greater part of her money, and skipped to parts unknown with it."

"I had no idea that he was such a villain!" the woman declared.

"This is the man for whose sake you were willing to commit murder!" the detective exclaimed, in a reproachful way.

"I was mad!" the woman responded.

"Yes, you were, indeed!"

"And now to give you a little bit more of the history of this unmitigated rascal, let me tell you some things which I discovered when I went to investigate his record."

"You are not his first wife."

"Is that possible?" the woman exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Nor his second, nor third, for I discovered that he had three wives before he married you, and as far as I could find out he never troubled himself to get a divorce from any one of them."

"The scoundrel!" cried the wife, now at a white heat of indignation.

"His game was to marry any woman who had money, that he could induce to have him, and then clear out."

"Yes, I had a little money when we were married, and I gave it to him, then you arrested him, and the money went to pay the lawyer who defended him."

"When I encountered you in New York I got an idea that you were one of his victims, but I never had a chance to say anything to you about the matter, and now I have gone into this full explanation for a particular purpose."

"Your husband is supposed to have gone to England, but it is my impression that he will one day return to this country, and as he is one of the men who deserves to be punished for his misdeeds, I should like to prosecute him for bigamy, and send him back to the prison from which he managed to escape by trick and device."

"I will aid you!" the wronged wife responded, immediately.

"And I am so glad that you saved me from the commission of a crime," she continued gratefully.

"That is all right," said Joe Phenix, rising. "As soon as I locate my man I will let you know."

Then the detective took his departure.

Nothing of moment in connection with the man-hunter occurred until the next morning; then, when on his way to the post office, he encountered one of the most prominent of the Cincinnati detectives, who happened to be an old acquaintance.

"Hello, Phenix!" the Cincinnati exclaimed. "I had no idea that you were in town, but you have arrived just in time to go to work, if you are anxious for a job."

"Always ready for work!"

"One of the wealthiest men in the city has just been mysteriously murdered!"

CHAPTER XI.

A BARGAIN.

THE gambler, Scotty, surveyed his companion, the tramp printer, with an expression of wonder.

"Oh, I mean what I say!" McMorrow exclaimed. "I know it is mighty strange, but it is a sure enough fact, and you are safe in gambling on it."

"My wife is in this town of Cincinnati, and she has married again!"

"Well, there really isn't anything wonderful about that, when you come to examine the circumstances," the sport intimated. "You were away for years—you didn't support the woman, and what is more natural than that she should marry again, so as to get some man to take care of her?"

"Oh, that is all right, of course," the tramp printer observed.

"I don't blame the woman for trying to better her condition, seeing that I didn't do anything for her."

"You haven't any right to as long as you left her to get along the best way she could."

"Oh, I am not finding any fault about that, but here is where the killing part comes in," the other replied.

"I was about as poor a husband as any woman could pick up, and my wife had to work hard to enable us to get along at all, but she has married a banker—one of the richest men in the city!"

"You don't mean it?" the gambler exclaimed.

"Honest! It is the solid truth I am telling you!"

"Well, that is a mighty strange fact, and I don't wonder that you are surprised."

"Now then, just keep your eyes on me while I develop the little game!" the tramp printer enjoined, with a leering smile, full of cunning and guile.

"In my opinion the odds are about a hundred to one that the woman never took the trouble to get a divorce from me," McMorrow continued.

"Some women are mighty careless about legal matters, and their carelessness is only equaled by their ignorance."

"Well, likely you haven't made any mistake about the matter," Scotty inferred. "If she knew but little about the law she would be apt to conclude that, as you did not support her, and had disappeared, she was at liberty to marry again—that long absence and non-support were the same as a divorce, you know."

"But it isn't!" the tramp printer insisted, with a prolonged chuckle. "and if she married again without getting a court and legal divorce from me then she has got herself into a pretty bad box. See?"

"I see that is true."

"And, I think it gives the chance for me to collar a good bit of money!" McMorrow now advised, literally "showing the hand he held."

"I haven't got anything against the woman, you know," the tramp continued. "I do not bear her the least bit of ill-will because she went off and got spliced to another man, for it was only natural to get another fellow to support her, seeing that I did not; but, as long as she has plenty of money, and I haven't any, I don't think I am guilty of any great crime if I try to get a little of her cash."

"It looks to me as if that wasn't an unfair game," the gambler reasoned. She has made a mistake, and she ought not to complain if you take advantage of the fact to get a stake," Scotty continued.

"Particularly when she has plenty of money, and can spare some of it just as well as not."

"You are right!" the gambler assented. "A fact like that ought to be taken into consideration."

"Now then, it is just as I told you in the beginning, a scheme of this kind is too much for me to carry out."

"I can plan the thing all right, but I can't execute it."

"Yes, I understand."

"But you are just the man to play a game of this kind."

"You are right! It is just in my line."

"I would only make a bungle of it," McMorrow admitted.

"I never did have any head for business, and I know that I can't manage an affair of this kind, but if you will take hold of it I will give you half of whatever stake can be got for your trouble."

"That is a bargain!" the gambler exclaimed. "I will agree to manage the affair, and will do all I can to make a good stake."

"My wife, who was named Katherine Smith when I married her, is now Mrs. Horace Latchford."

"Oh, yes, I know all about him!" Scotty exclaimed.

"Why, he is one of the richest men in Cincinnati," the sport continued.

"By George, old man, if we don't make a big stake it will be a wonder!"

CHAPTER XII.

HOW HE WAS KILLED.

"I HAVE just had a telephone message from the chief to come out and make an investigation, and I should be very glad indeed to have you accompany me, for I know what a keen nose you have for smelling out a mystery," the Cincinnati sleuth-bond remarked.

"You are pleased to be complimentary," the veteran detective returned.

"But I shall be pleased to go with you, and if I can be of any assistance you can command me."

The two set out at once, and in due time reached the Carmanage Mansion, where they were received by the superintendent of police.

He was also an intimate acquaintance of Joe Phenix, for the latter's long experience in the New York detective service had brought him in personal contact with about all of the superintendents of police of the leading cities.

"This is a very mysterious affair, Phenix, and I fancy that it will puzzle you, old and experienced detective as you are," the police chief remarked as he led the way to the sitting room.

Then, after they got into the apartment where the body had been placed upon the table, covered by a sheet, the chief of police began his explanation.

"When the doctor arrived and made the discovery that the old gentleman had been murdered, he knew enough to turn everybody out of the room, so that nothing should be disturbed, and we could have a clear field to go ahead on."

"Now, as far as I can ascertain, the facts in the case seem to be as follows:

"Mr. Carmanage, probably, fell asleep in his chair, after taking the light lunch which he was accustomed to eat nightly before going to bed."

"The person who killed him took advantage of his sleep to drive a long, slender dagger, the blade of which was apparently not much bigger than a knitting-needle, straight to his heart."

"There was evidently no struggle, for the old man sat in his chair just as if he was asleep."

"Robbery was apparently the motive, for Mr. Carmanage's watch and chain were taken, and all the money from his wallet."

"He had quite a large sum, for the butler saw the money in his possession early in the evening."

"An investigation reveals that the silver closet has been robbed, the lock being sawed out in a manner which indicates that some expert cracksmen did the job, for it is plain that it is not the work of an amateur, but there were no signs to show that a forcible entry of the house was made."

Then the chief explained about the dog, which always roamed loose at night, and told how the animal had been found outside of the front gates, waiting to gain admittance in the morning.

The gates were securely locked, though, and there were no signs that they had been tampered with.

The superintendent, being an able officer, had not failed to examine the back door in the wall, and explained that it was also locked.

"So you see," the chief said in conclusion, "from all appearance one would come to the opinion that the cracksmen who robbed the mansion also killed the master of it."

Joe Phenix shook his head.

"You don't believe that, eh?" the superintendent asked, with a smile.

"No, I do not."

"Neither do I!" exclaimed the chief.

"Nor I!" declared the detective, who answered to the name of Philip Slaughter.

"It would be an act of folly of which no experienced cracksmen could be guilty!" Joe Phenix declared.

"Very true!" the superintendent assented. "It looks more like an act of private vengeance."

"Yes, yes, that is just exactly what it appears to be!" Slaughter declared.

"Of course, a desperate man caught red-handed in the act of robbing a house, and perceiving that his capture was certain unless he struck down the man who stood in his way, might, and probably would, show fight," Joe Phenix argued.

"But as far as can be discovered in this case, the man was murdered in his sleep, and there wasn't any struggle."

"Your reasoning is correct, I think," the chief assented.

"As far as I can see the most probable surmise in this case is that somebody, who wanted to put the old man out of the way, discovered in some manner that there were thieves in the house, and took advantage of their presence to kill the old man, going on the idea that when the murder was discovered, everybody would immediately jump to the conclusion that the housebreakers committed the deed," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, you are right!" the superintendent assented. "That is just the game!"

The detective nodded his approval.

"I am going for the cracksmen, though, just the same," the superintendent declared.

"Although I don't believe that they had anything to do with the murder, but I want them for the robbery."

"That's right!" Detective Slaughter assented.

"I have sent a telephone message to have an immediate search made of all the 'fences' in the city," the superintendent remarked.

"There are only a few, I am pleased to say, and if a prompt search is made we may be able to get on the track of the valuables."

"The watch and chain will be hard articles for the rascals to get rid of," Joe Phenix remarked in a reflective way.

"But as for the silver, if the fence knows his business, it will go into the melting-pot as soon as he gets his hands on it," the veteran detective continued.

"Yes, I warned the officers in regard to that, and instructed them to put in their best licks on the watch and chain."

"This looks as if this was a house affair, eh, Phenix?" the chief asked.

"The murder committed by one of the inmates?" the veteran man-hunter observed, thoughtfully.

"Yes, it certainly seems to me to have all the ear-marks of a case of that kind," the superintendent assented.

"Supposing that it is a house case, doesn't the old game come in here—look for the person who will profit most by the death of the murdered man?" Slaughter asked.

"That is always in order, eh, Phenix?" said the chief.

"Oh, yes; and how about the family?" the veteran man-hunter asked.

"I questioned the doctor about the matter," the superintendent replied.

"And as he is the family physician of course he is posted."

"He is an able man, Phenix, one of the best doctors in the city," the police chief continued.

"And it would have been an act of folly for me to attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of such an old hand."

"He knew what I was after just as soon as I commenced to question him, and although I could see that he was deeply affected he did not attempt to beat about the bush, but was anxious to give me all the information in his power."

"Mr. Carmanage had only one relative in the world; the doctor is sure in regard to this, for he had it from the man's own lips."

"And that relative is a young girl about eighteen years old, the old man's niece."

"I know all about the young lady," Slaughter remarked. "Although I am not personally acquainted with her."

"Mr. Carmanage thought a great deal of her, and it is commonly supposed that she will inherit the bulk of his fortune," the detective added.

"Of course, if we go on the old rule, all signs point to the girl," the superintendent observed.

"But as I happen to know something of the young lady by reputation I cannot bring myself to believe that she can have had anything to do with the matter."

"Yes, the chances are very great that she is innocent unless she is a moral monster," Joe Phenix observed.

"She has the reputation of being a very amiable, sweet tempered girl," Detective Slaughter observed.

"Suppose we examine the body," the New Yorker suggested.

This was done and it did not take the three long to come to the conclusion that the blow which had stolen the millionaire's life away had been dealt by a firm and muscular hand.

From the position of the wound, as well as from the doctor's statement, they were satisfied that the assassin knew exactly where to strike to inflict a mortal wound and with deliberate determination had, with a single blow, cleft the old man's heart in twain.

It was indeed very unlikely that any woman should commit such a murder.

Even one steeped in crime would not be likely to have the nerve and skill to do the deed.

"Suppose we have an interview with the young lady," Joe Phenix suggested.

"From her we might be able to gain some information of value."

"That is a good idea. Slaughter, have the kindness to summon the young lady," the superintendent requested.

"Certainly," and the detective took his departure.

"Oh, by the way, Phenix, I picked up a rare weapon the other day, and as it will be

more useful to you than to me you are welcome to it."

"Thanks!" the man-hunter replied.

Then the chief presented Phenix with the weapon, a long-barreled, old-style pistol.

Joe Phenix examined it carefully, while the superintendent watched him.

"It is indeed a rare and beautiful weapon!" the man-hunter declared.

Then the door opened and Detective Slaughter appeared with Blanche.

Joe Phenix pocketed the pistol and both he and the superintendent bowed when the detective introduced them to Blanche.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISCOVERY.

ALTHOUGH Blanche was deeply affected by the tragedy which had taken place, yet being naturally a strong-minded girl she was not so prostrated as to be unable to comply with the request.

Great was her astonishment though when the superintendent explained what had taken place.

The police chief was a man of great refinement, and took care to impart the information in a delicate manner.

"It is really dreadful!" the girl exclaimed.

"Yes, you are right; it is a fearful tragedy, and at present the affair seems to be wrapped in the deepest mystery," the superintendent remarked.

"But it is our idea that your uncle was the victim of some personal enemy," the police chief continued.

"And we are desirous of learning from you if he had had any trouble with any one."

Quickly to the girl's mind then came the remembrance of the story which her uncle had told her about the vendetta.

And she immediately related the particulars.

The superintendent set down all the details in his memorandum-book.

"This is important information," he remarked.

"Are you aware whether these particulars are known to any one else or not?" he continued.

"I do not think they are," Blanche replied. "For my uncle only related the story to me last night, and from the way in which he spoke I do not believe that any one else knows anything about the matter."

"I fancy that you have given us a clue by means of which we may be able to apprehend the assassin," the superintendent observed.

"Might I ask, as a particular favor, that you will not mention anything about this matter to any one?" the chief asked.

"Oh, yes, I will be careful not to speak of it," the girl replied.

"The newspaper reporters will flock to the house as soon as they learn that a tragedy has taken place here, and as they are always anxious to get all the information possible in regard to a case of this kind they will be sure to question you."

"I cannot give them any information, for I know absolutely nothing about the dreadful affair. Any of the servants could tell as much as I about the matter," the girl remarked.

"If the reporters should get hold of this vendetta story they would undoubtedly make a great ado about it," the superintendent explained.

"Of course the men cannot be blamed for acting in that way, for it is all a matter of business with them, but the premature publication of information of this kind often defeats the ends of justice."

"I will be careful not to say a word about the matter to any one," Blanche responded.

Then the superintendent thanked her and she retired.

"Well, Mr. Phenix, what do you think about this matter?" the superintendent asked after the girl had left the room.

"It is my opinion that if this clue can be followed up it will lead to the discovery of the murderer," the veteran detective replied.

"But there is one point about this matter which, it seems to me, ought to be taken into consideration," Detective Slaughter observed.

"And that is, can we be sure that the girl has told the truth about this vendetta business."

"Yes, yes! that point is well taken," the superintendent observed.

"If she had any hand in the crime it is likely, you know, for her to concoct a story of this kind for the express purpose of throwing the police on a false scent," the detective remarked.

"It will be an easy matter to ascertain the truth," Joe Phenix said.

"A telegraph dispatch to New Orleans requesting the chief of police there to ascertain if John Carmanage was murdered in the manner related by this young lady, will, undoubtedly, confirm or disprove the tale."

"Oh, yes, the matter can be arranged in that way," the superintendent assented.

"The chief in New Orleans is a very nice fellow, and as he is a particular friend of mine he will be glad to do anything he can to oblige me."

"I fancy, Mr. Phenix, that you are rather inclined to believe the girl has told the truth about the matter," Detective Slaughter observed.

"Yes, I am, for although it is a fact that criminals often tell the most stupid lies with the idea of concealing their connection with a crime—falsehoods which will not stand investigation at all—yet I am of the opinion that this young lady is too sensible to try any game of that kind even if she is guilty," the veteran detective argued.

"I don't think there is much doubt but what the girl is all right," the superintendent declared.

"While she was telling the story I watched her narrowly, and if she was not telling the truth then she is one of the finest actresses I ever saw, and would certainly make a fortune upon the stage."

"She certainly did act as if she was telling the truth," Detective Slaughter assented.

"It ought not to be such an extremely difficult matter to track this man," the chief of police remarked, in a reflective way.

"He is a stranger, probably, and came to Cincinnati for the express purpose of killing Mr. Carmanage."

"Being a stranger he would have to secure lodgings somewhere, and the chances are great that as he undoubtedly believes he committed the murder so cleverly that it will not be possible for any one to get on his track, he will remain in the city to gloat, as it were, over his success."

"Yes, I think you are right in that surmise," Joe Phenix assented.

"If the doer of the deed was wise he would depart by the first train which he could catch, but experience has shown that men who commit crimes of this kind are usually possessed with a morbid desire to remain near the scene of their misdeeds."

"Oh, yes, that is a well-known fact!" the superintendent exclaimed.

"And if it was not for this peculiar fact, about nine out of every ten of the men who commit crimes of this sort would succeed in getting off," he continued.

"But they don't 'cut their lucky,' as the saying is, and scoot to parts unknown," Detective Slaughter observed.

"On the contrary, they hang around, and, sooner or later, make some blunder which gives us a chance to nail them," the detective continued.

"I think the chances are good that we will get this fellow," the superintendent declared.

"Every man on the force, who can possibly be spared, I will put on the case!" the chief continued.

"I will have every hotel and lodging-house in the city examined, and if he is not captured it will be mighty strange."

"If the man was shrewd enough to plan his crime carefully, and well in advance of the execution of the deed, then he may have been sufficiently wise to calculate that an exhaustive search would be made for him and taken precautions accordingly," Joe Phenix observed.

"Yes, that is true, and if he did have forethought enough to anticipate this action of ours, then he would undoubtedly avoid hotels and lodging-houses," the superintendent remarked reflectively.

"But the man must sleep somewhere, so I will order my fellows to examine all the boarding-houses, and those where furnished rooms can be had," he continued. "And it seems to me that if the search is thorough

enough we ought to be able to get on his track."

"Yes, that is true, but Cincinnati is a big city, and if the man is an extra sharp one it will be a hard matter to catch him unless he commits some blunder," Joe Phenix observed. "You can take hope though from the fact that he is almost certain to make a mistake of that kind, for the majority of criminals do."

"That is certainly correct," the superintendent assented.

"But now let us make an exhaustive examination of the house," the chief continued.

"The doctor is an able man and as soon as he had made the discovery that there had been a murder he gave orders that nothing should be disturbed until after the arrival of the police, so everything is just as it was."

"It is fortunate for the cause of justice that the doctor was a sensible man," Joe Phenix observed.

"We will commence with this apartment," the superintendent remarked.

"Mr. Carmanage was seated in that easy-chair when the discovery of the crime was made," the police chief continued.

"Hello! what is that?" Joe Phenix exclaimed as he fixed his gaze on the chair.

"See! by the front leg, furthest from the table!"

And then the veteran man-hunter picked up a miniature diamond, just about the size of a common pin-head.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CLUE.

THE three examined the stone with considerable curiosity.

"I should judge that it came from a ring," Joe Phenix remarked.

"One of those peculiar ones where a dozen or two of little stones are massed in together like Mosaic work."

"Yes, I think that is correct," the superintendent observed.

"And now the question comes up—is there anybody in the house who possesses such a ring, because if there isn't it is reasonable to suppose that the stone was dropped by the murderer, and it may prove to be a most important clue to his discovery."

The others assented to this.

"The young lady will, probably, be able to give us some information on this point, and although I hate to trouble her again, yet under the circumstances it cannot well be avoided," the chief remarked.

So a message was sent to Miss Blanche, asking her to oblige the superintendent with a few minutes' conversation.

The young lady came at once, and the chief of police explained about the finding of the diamond.

Miss Carmanage could not give any information in regard to it.

Her uncle did not possess such a ring, she hadn't anything of the kind, nor any one else in the house, to her knowledge.

Of course it was extremely unlikely that any of the servants would possess a costly trinket of the kind.

"This may prove to be a valuable clue, so I will be much obliged, Miss Carmanage, if you will not mention the matter to any one," the superintendent remarked.

The young lady readily promised that she would not, and then retired.

"Well, gentlemen, I don't know what you think about it, but in my opinion we have secured a most important clue," the chief of police announced.

The others nodded assent.

"It is a very small matter, apparently, but little leaks sometimes sink big ships," the superintendent observed.

"Now we will continue our examination and see if we can make any other discoveries," he added.

But the three were not fortunate enough to find out anything in addition to what the chief already knew.

The others agreed with the superintendent that the house had been "cracked" by experienced crooks who understood how to do a good job to perfection.

"If I can succeed in nailing the men who got away with the silver I may be able to get some information of value out of them," the chief observed.

"Very likely," Joe Phenix assented, while

Detective Slaughter nodded his head as a token that he agreed with his superior.

"I think you had better take charge of the job of locating the crooks, Slaughter," the superintendent remarked.

"It ought not to be a difficult matter to get on their track, for only first-class men could do such a job as this, and as I don't know any of our home brood who are up to a trick of this kind the chances are big that some stranger put up the game."

"I will get them if they are in the town!" Detective Slaughter declared, confidently.

"It may be possible, you know, that they have cleared out," the superintendent observed, reflectively.

"But even if they have, you will surely be able to learn something about them, for the 'mob' must have been in Cincinnati for a week or so to get the time to 'pipe' this house off or else they would never have been able to do the work in such a skillful manner."

The others agreed that this was a reasonable supposition, and then as there wasn't anything more for them to do they returned to Cincinnati.

As soon as the three arrived in the city Detective Slaughter left the chief and Joe Phenix, who proceeded to the office of the superintendent, while he went in search of the crooks.

Hardly had the chief and the New York detective taken seats in the office when the reporters commenced to make their appearance.

In some mysterious way the news of the death of the millionaire had leaked out, and the press gentlemen were eager for information.

The superintendent did not hesitate to furnish the news-gatherers with all the particulars, with the exception of the diamond incident; this he kept to himself.

In about an hour Detective Slaughter returned, and then the chief gave orders denying himself to all callers.

"Well, did you succeed in getting any information?" the superintendent inquired.

"Nothing of any great importance—only just a starter," the detective replied.

"Where did you go?" asked the chief.

"To English Kelly's crib."

"That was a good move," the superintendent remarked with an approving nod.

"This man, Kelly, keeps a saloon which is a little off color," the chief explained to Phenix.

"He is an Englishman, and as he is always blowing about how far superior England is to this country, he has got the name of English Kelly."

"I have never tried to shut up the fellow's saloon—for he manages to run an orderly place enough, but it is a regular headquarters for all the crooks in the town, and as Kelly is anxious to keep on the right side of me, I am often able to get important information out of him on the sly."

"Yes, I comprehend," the New Yorker remarked.

"He acts as a sort of stool-pigeon for you."

"Exactly! He don't really give the crooks away, but drops a hint or two which puts me on the right track."

"Such men are able often to give valuable assistance, and it is wise to allow saloons of this kind to keep open, for then men in our line can get at the crooks," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, that is my idea," the superintendent assented.

"Once in a while some new mayor, who has become impressed with the idea that he can run the town better than any man who has preceded him, gets a knowledge of the existence of a place of this kind, and worries me for a while about suppressing it," he continued.

"And sometimes it is hard work for me to convince the man that I am not a czar, vested with absolute power, and able to close up a man's place merely because it has a bad name."

"Reformers of this kind, who have only a slight knowledge of the matter in hand, are usually hard men to get along with," Joe Phenix observed.

"The police officer who thoroughly understands his business comprehends that there are certain kinds of crime which cannot be stamped out, and if an attempt is made in

that line, the people are only scattered, so the police find it a difficult matter to keep their eyes upon them, while if they are allowed to remain in one place, they can be kept under constant surveillance."

"Yes, that is the idea exactly," the superintendent remarked.

"Well, go ahead, Slaughter," the chief said to the detective.

"I got a chance to talk to Kelly on the quiet, and found that he was willing to do all he could for us," the sleuth-hound explained.

"I told him about the cracking of the crib, and asked if he knew of any first-class men in the cracksman line who would be capable of doing a job of this kind."

"He thought the matter over for a moment, and then replied that as far as he knew there wasn't a man in Cincinnati equal to such a job, with the exception of a fellow who had just arrived from Chicago with a pal."

"The pal was a stranger and he didn't know anything about him, but as he was traveling with the cracksman he thought it likely he could turn his hand to house-breaking."

"Who is the cracksman?" the superintendent inquired.

"Tommy Powland—Tommy, the Rat," Detective Slaughter replied.

"Ah, yes, Tommy is an old acquaintance, and he could do a trick of this kind to the queen's taste," the superintendent remarked.

"You must know the Rat," the chief continued, turning to Joe Phenix. "For I have read of his being in trouble in New York."

"Yes, I know the man by reputation, but I never happened to personally come in contact with him," the New Yorker replied.

"What is the name of his pal?" the chief asked.

"Dalstan—Jerry Dalstan," Detective Slaughter answered.

The superintendent shook his head.

"I don't know the man," he said.

"Can you place him, Phenix?" the chief continued.

"No, not under that name, but some of these fellows have a dozen names, you know," the veteran man-hunter replied.

"Kelly said that Tommy Powland would be just the man to do a job of this kind, but as he had just got in town, professing to be very short of money, and declaring that if he didn't strike a chance soon to lift a good-sized swag somewhere he would be in a hole, it did not seem probable that he could have had anything to do with this affair."

"This talk may be merely a blind to keep the officers from suspecting that he had a hand in the robbery of the Carmanage mansion," Joe Phenix suggested.

"That is true, and it will not do any harm for us to keep our eyes upon the pair," the superintendent remarked.

"Did you make a call upon the pawn-brokers?" the chief continued.

"Yes, but none of them know anything about the matter, or they pretend that they don't," the detective replied.

"There is only one man in Cincinnati who would be apt to take in a swag of this kind," the superintendent remarked, reflectively.

"Do you mean old Knatchbull?" Detective Slaughter inquired.

"Yes, old Tim; he is an English Jew, and as sharp as the English Jews generally are. He keeps a pawnshop," the chief explained to Joe Phenix.

"And I am perfectly satisfied that the man will take in a swag whenever he gets the chance, provided the circumstances are such that he doesn't run much risk."

"I have had a rod in pickle for the old fox for some time, but I will have to acknowledge that the old man has been too smart for me, for I have never been able to catch him, although in a couple of cases I thought I had a sure thing."

"The only articles which could be traced are the watch and chain," Joe Phenix observed, in a reflective way.

"The silver, of course, would go immediately into the melting-pot," the New Yorker continued. "So it would not be possible for any one to identify the plate."

"That is correct," the superintendent assented. "The watch and chain are the only things for us to search for, and if the old English fox has bought the articles, the odds

are great he will be shrewd enough to hide them away so that no fly cop will be able to get at them, no matter how smart he may be.

"You see the old fellow keeps a supply store for peddlers," the superintendent continued.

"Probably from thirty to forty men get their stocks of him, and as they travel all over the Western and Southern country, it is an easy matter for the peddlers to get rid of stolen jewelry in remote country places, and under such circumstances it would be a hard matter for any one to trace the articles."

"Yes, that is true," Joe Phenix assented.

"I would be glad, Phenix, to have you try your hand at this case," the superintendent remarked.

"I can see right at the beginning that it is going to be a mighty difficult one," the chief continued.

"Yes, undoubtedly," Joe Phenix assented.

"Well, I have no objection to taking the case."

Then the veteran consulted his watch, explained to the chief that he had an appointment and departed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BANKER'S STORY.

FROM the Police Headquarters Joe Phenix proceeded to the office of the banker who had summoned him to Cincinnati.

It was only a short walk, and within ten minutes after quitting the presence of the superintendent of police the New York detective was ushered into the private office of the banker.

Horace Latchford was one of the leading bankers of the city, a man reputed to be worth a million or more.

In person the banker was a tall, portly, dignified gentleman, about fifty years old, with a good face and a genial manner.

He had made Joe Phenix's acquaintance a year or so before the time of which we write.

A trusted clerk had absconded with a large amount of money, and as he was supposed to have gone to New York, the banker came there in search of him.

Joe Phenix had been recommended to him as a good man to undertake the case, and it had been put into his hands.

As was usual with him, the veteran detective brought the affair to a successful conclusion, and the banker had departed with a high idea of the talent of the man-hunter.

Upon the detective's arrival, the banker gave orders to his clerk to say that he was busy and could not see any callers for an hour or so.

"Now, Mr. Phenix, I am about to relate to you the particulars of a rather complicated case, and as I know I can rely upon your discretion, I shall not hesitate to speak freely," the banker said.

"Yes, detectives are like lawyers and ministers, and all confidences reposed in them are held sacred."

"Of course, Mr. Phenix, you know what kind of a man I am, and you understand the sort of position which I occupy in the world's esteem."

The detective bowed assent.

"I am commonly reputed to be a sharp, shrewd, long-headed business man, and I think I may say, without being accused of egotism, that my business transactions have borne out the reputation."

"And now comes the strange part of it," the banker continued, with a weighty shake of the head.

"I, the shrewd, sagacious business man, have been guilty of committing an act of folly in my private life such as no man possessed of the average amount of common sense ought to have done."

"There is a classical saying, you know, that even the great god, Jove, nods sometimes," the veteran detective remarked.

"Yes, and I suppose there is no doubt that the greatest of men will make mistakes once in a while."

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly! There is no disputing the truth of that statement."

"I am what is called a self-made man; that is, I had no money when I started and had no wealthy friends to help me along."

"But, to make an honest confession, like the majority of self-made men who boast with a great deal of pride of having risen from nothing to affluence, I was aided by a fortunate circumstance which put me on the high road to prosperity."

"I was a humble clerk in a banker's office, and the only daughter of my employer took it into her head to fall in love with me."

"As a rule, when a thing of this sort happens, the father is generally very indignant, but in this instance the daughter had so much influence over her sire that he did not make any objection to her choice."

"I will admit that I was not particularly infatuated with the lady, but she was a good-looking girl, an heiress; and as all the world thought I was wonderfully fortunate in securing so rich a prize, I married her, and from that union came my wealth."

"My wife and I did not get on well together, for she was imperious and domineering, but as both of us were too proud to allow the world to know that we did not live in harmony, we passed for a model couple."

"We lived together for over twenty years, and then death released me from my bondage, for such it was in reality."

"No children had come to bless our union, and during the last few years of the twenty we had lived almost as strangers to each other, although we arranged matters so that the world at large never suspected the truth."

"I had been very fortunate in my business operations, and long before my wife's death my fortune far exceeded that of her father."

"About five years after my wife's death, I accidentally made the acquaintance of a woman in humble circumstances, who was supporting herself by the work of her own hands."

"I have often read of the jargon of the spiritualists in regard to certain men and women having a natural affinity for each other, but I never took much stock in the idea until I happened to meet this lady."

"Well, there is no doubt in my mind that there is a great deal of truth in the supposition, although some extremists are inclined to carry the matter entirely too far," the detective remarked.

"From the beginning I took a great liking to the woman, and it was not long before I came to the conclusion that she was the one person of all the world to make me happy."

"From the way in which she acted, too, I could see that she regarded me with a favorable eye."

"Being satisfied that I had not made any mistake about the matter, I asked the woman to become my wife."

"She was no foolish young girl, but a sensible woman of twenty-eight, so she did not beat about the bush at all, but spoke in regard to the matter just as frankly as I did."

"Without any hesitation she told me the story of her life."

"When a girl of seventeen she had married a worthless fellow who turned out to be a very bad husband indeed."

"He did not beat or ill-treat her, but as he was so indolent and careless that it was a hard matter for him to support himself, the unfortunate young wife had a hard time of it as long as she depended upon him."

"The husband was by nature a wandering vagabond; he would start off on a trip without saying a word to his wife, and she would not know whether he was dead or alive for a year or so, when he would reappear as abruptly as he had disappeared."

"I should think that it would not have taken her long to get tired of that sort of thing," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Well, she was a patient sort of a girl, and she put up with it for a number of years, until finally she awoke to the consciousness that all the affection she had ever entertained for the man had vanished. Then she told him plainly that all was over between them and she never wanted to see his face again."

"The husband received the news calmly enough, merely remarking that perhaps it was for the best they should separate, and departed."

"A man of that sort, who had calmly wandered away whenever he felt like it, would not be apt to mourn greatly because

his wife decided not to have anything to do with him," the detective observed.

"For four years she had neither seen nor heard from him, and she had got the impression that the man was dead."

"Now then, the proper thing for me to have done under the circumstances would have been to advise the woman to get a legal divorce on the ground of desertion and aid her to do the same."

"Yes, that is correct."

"But I didn't. The husband had said upon parting that he was going to California and it was doubtful if he would ever come back to the East again, so I made the grievous error of deciding there wasn't any necessity of her getting a divorce, and she allowed me to persuade her to marry me."

"Ah, yes, that was a mistake," the veteran detective observed.

"And I can anticipate what has happened," he continued. "The husband has appeared."

"Yes, you are correct," the banker assented. "My wife saw him the other day on the street, and although he did not act as though he saw her, yet she is certain that he did, and she is apprehensive that he followed her home, but she is not sure of it."

"She told me of the circumstance, and I immediately telegraphed to you."

"You understand that as yet the man has not made any movement, but if he has found out, or does find out, that his wife has married a wealthy man like myself, without obtaining a divorce from him, he would be very apt to try to extort money as the price of his silence."

"Yes, such a man as you have described would be very likely to try a game of that kind," Joe Phenix assented.

"Now then, although I did make a terrible blunder in marrying the woman before she obtained a legal separation, yet as our married life has been extremely happy, I do not intend to either give her up or submit to be blackmailed, and I rely upon you to find some way to get me out of the scrape."

"It will not be a difficult matter," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Have your wife depart immediately to one of the Western States, where a short time of residence only is required of the applicant for a divorce, and apply for a separation on the ground of desertion and lack of support."

"There will not be any difficulty in her securing a legal decree, for by aid of plenty of money to grease the wheels of justice, the machinery of the law can be made to move with wonderful swiftness."

"After the divorce is obtained you can marry the woman over again, and it will not be possible for the husband to trouble you."

"The plan is a good one, and I will have it executed at once!" the banker declared.

"I will look up the best State to which to go," the detective remarked, as he rose. "And if the husband makes his appearance, refer him to me."

And then Joe Phenix departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WANDERER.

IT was about nine o'clock on the night of the day when Joe Phenix held his interview with the banker.

A fine rain had commenced, and those people obliged to be out were hurrying along, anxious to reach shelter.

It was a nasty night.

The brawny policeman who covered the "Fifth street beat," in the neighborhood of Fountain Square, was slowly proceeding toward Plum street when he was accosted by a poorly-dressed fellow, slouching along in the rain, with an old felt hat pulled down over his eyes.

The man was a big fellow, very dark-complexioned, as though he had been exposed to the sun and wind.

He possessed a peculiar hangdog expression, just such a man as a good judge of character would be inclined to give a wide berth to if he encountered him in a lonely place on a dark night.

"This is bad weather," the man remarked.

"Yes, it will pass for a nasty night," the officer responded,

He was a good-natured man, and, although he suspected the other was one of those homeless wretches found in all large cities, yet he did not speak harshly to him.

"I don't know much about Cincinnati," the man explained.

"Are you a stranger here?"

"Yes, and I have just arrived."

"By the Shanks-Mare Special Express?" the officer questioned, jocosely.

"You are right! That is the line I patronized this time," and the man grinned.

"It is a good line for a man who is short of money."

"Yes, and the passengers never have any disputes with the conductor about the fare."

"That is so," the officer assented. "But that wouldn't make any difference to a man like yourself, for you are flush of cash, of course."

"Oh, yes; I am rolling in wealth just now!" the wanderer declared, with a grimace.

"Why, if a wealthy bloke was to offer to give me the best house in town if I would only rub two cents together in my pocket, I wouldn't be able to get it."

"Completely cleaned out, eh?"

"You bet!"

"That is bad, for Cincinnati isn't a good town for a man to go broke in."

"I don't know any town that is—do you?"

The policeman laughed.

"I reckon you have got me; for a fact, I don't know any such town."

"I took the trouble to speak to you for I thought, maybe, you could give me a little information."

"Information is cheap, and I always have it on tap."

"As I was saying, I am down on my luck in the worst kind of way."

"You look it!" the officer assured, with a smile at the seedy garments of the other.

"And, as I am a stranger in this here burg, I don't stand much chance to raise a stake, you see."

"Not much chance, although I s'pose you could collar a few stray nickels by doing the begging act."

"Oh, I reckon I won't starve as long as I have got a tongue in my head, for I never did yet."

"Yes, a man like yourself can always strike some flats for a few coins."

"But what I was arter was a place where I kin hang out—some saloon, you know, where the boss don't mind a cove like myself loafing round—some place, you understand, where the men who are on the cross are in the habit of going."

"Crooks, you mean?"

"Yes; but not that I want to do any crooked work, you know, for, though I ain't a going to pretend that I hav'n't been in trouble in my time, yet I am on the dead square now, every time."

"Until you get a good chance to pull off a stake worth going for?"

"Oh, no; I wouldn't do it! Honest Injun! I am on the dead square now, as I said," the wanderer averred, earnestly.

"Yes, of course; and you are quite willing to swear to it, too, I suppose," sarcastically. "I have yet to meet a man of your stamp who wasn't on the square."

"It is natural for you to have doubts about the thing, but I am giving it to you straight, this time," the vagabond insisted, and then explained:

"You see, the game I want to work is a mighty simple one. In a saloon of this kind I stand a chance to run across some crook who is flush, and by faking up a ripe ghost story I might manage to get a stake out of him if I work the trick right."

"That is so," the officer admitted. "With both crooks and gamblers it is easy got and easy gone."

"I stand a good show to get a lift to help me on if I can only find the right place where I can see my men."

"Let me see," said the policeman, reflectively. "There isn't many saloons of the kind in Cincinnati, for we hav'n't many crooks here, when the size of the city is taken into consideration."

"So I have always heard."

"I think English Kelty's place the best

for you to strike, for you will be more apt to find the men you want there than in any other gin-mill in town."

Then the policeman instructed the tramp how to reach the place, and the man, after thanking the kindly disposed officer, slunk away through the rain.

It only took the wanderer about ten minutes to reach his destination, which he found to be a common, ordinary saloon, such as are in almost every block in the business part of the "Paris of America."

There was a bar, and tables and chairs for the accommodation of customers who wished to sit down or to play cards.

At the end of this resort was a door which gave entrance to another room reserved for customers who desired to drink in privacy, or to be free from the espionage of the police.

Two men stood behind the bar, one a stolid-faced, short-haired, young fellow, and a stout, burly, middle-aged man, with an extremely red face, whose general appearance betrayed the native of Britain's tight little island.

When the wanderer entered, the bartender was engaged in waiting upon some customers at the lower end of the bar, so he was able to speak privately to the saloon-keeper.

"Is this English Kelty's saloon?" he asked.

"This is the place," the saloon-keeper replied, surveying the man with a "sizing up" glance as he spoke.

"I want a glass of beer," and the wanderer deposited a nickel on the counter, as he spoke.

"My name is Barney Mickle, and I am playing in hard luck just now."

"That is bad," the Englishman remarked.

English Kelty was a good judge of character, and fancied he detected that the stranger was no common tramp, although he wasn't then in good feather.

"I have just arrived in town—have tramped it all the way from Tennessee, where I got into trouble about a little bank affair. The crib was cracked, and I was nailed on the outside, and, being a stranger in the town, the people all believed that I had something to do with the robbing; insisted, you understand, that I was the 'lookout,' who had been placed on the watch to give warning if anybody approached."

"These countrymen are always up to games of that kind."

"They put me through and sent me to the stone jug, but the jail wasn't strong enough to hold me and I managed to give leg bail."

"That was lucky."

"I made for Cincinnati, and, after getting in, hunted your place up, for I have always heard you spoken of as being a man who was willing to do all he could for a fellow who wasn't striking it rich."

"Oh, yes; I always try to do what I can for a man who is playing in hard luck."

"I ain't after money, you know," Mickle explained, "for I have been lucky enough to pick up a stake or two on the road; but I ain't rolling in wealth, you understand. I have got just enough to keep me until I can strike a job."

The saloon-keeper nodded.

"I don't pretend to be a first class crackman, for I am not, but if there is anybody round who is going to work a job, and they want a good helper to play the lookout trick, or anything of that kind, I don't believe they would be able to find a better man than myself."

The saloon-keeper took a glance around to make sure that no one was near enough to overhear the conversation, and then he said:

"Well, of course, you must understand that I really don't know anything about such matters. I keep a saloon, and as long as my customers behave themselves it is none of my business what they do outside, or how they get their money."

"Certainly not."

"If I had a suspicion that any of the boys had a little game on foot, I would prefer not to have any knowledge of it, for if the trick went wrong, and the fly cops got onto them, they might think I gave the snap away."

"Yes, they might."

"Now there are a couple of men who have just come to town, and they let on to me that they are thinking of trying to make

a stake—two good men they are, Slim Jerry Dalston and Thomas Powland, or Tommy the Rat, as he is called by the profesh."

"I don't know the men personally, but I have heard of them."

"They are in the back room now. I will introduce you, and I shouldn't be surprised if you could manage to get a job with them, if you are so disposed."

"I will be ever so much obliged to you!" the vagabond declared, as he finished his beer.

The saloon-keeper conducted Mickle into the rear room and introduced him to the two men whose names he had mentioned.

English Kelty was a shrewd fellow, but in this instance how he had been tricked it would have terrified him to know.

The tramp crook volunteer was the veteran detective, Joe Phenix!

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

THE announcement in the public prints of the death of the millionaire—the old time great whisky king, Stephen Carmanage—created a great excitement in the city of Cincinnati, and the declaration that he had perished by the hand of an assassin astounded the police.

The police authorities declared that they believed Mr. Carmanage had been murdered by the burglars who had robbed the house, and announced that they were doing all in their power to discover the audacious cracksmen.

Of course they could not refrain from making the old-time statement, dear to the heart of the average policeman in every clime and in every age.

They were in possession of some important clues, and they had no doubt that in an extremely short time they would succeed in apprehending the murderers.

But the astute newspaper men of Cincinnati had heard this sort of talk before and were not inclined to place implicit faith in the announcement.

The newspaper scribes had their own ideas in regard to the murder.

In a case of this kind the average reporter considers himself as able to "hit off the trail" as the average detective.

The newspaper men followed up the case like so many bloodhounds.

They examined everything and cross-examined everybody, and the result of this proceeding was that they came out in the newspapers and announced that it was their opinion the police had made a mistake.

The millionaire had not been robbed by the burglars who had robbed the house, and then they gave in full their reasons for so thinking.

But as the reporters hadn't the remotest idea who had done the deed, for all their investigations had not furnished them with a single clue, they fell back on vague conjecture, and the columns of the newspapers were full of theories, more or less wild and improbable as to who had done the deed.

The authorities did not allow the comments of the newspapers to trouble them, and the superintendent and detectives chuckled among themselves when they read the articles which went to show that the police were willfully blundering in the wrong direction.

And so a week passed away.

Both the detectives and the reporters did all in their power to get a clue to the mysterious murderer, but not a soul could lay claim to have discovered a single fact of any importance in connection with the mystery.

In a well-ordered household, such as the millionaire's certainly was, the untimely taking off of the master of the household, made but little difference.

Miss Blanche had been accustomed to giving orders, and there was a well-trained housekeeper to see that they were carried out.

Then too Miss Carmanage had a friend, a middle-aged Kentucky widow, who came immediately to assist the girl as soon as she heard of the sorrow which had fallen upon her.

Mrs. Belle McClintock this lady was named.

Her husband had been a partner of the dead millionaire and she had known Blanche ever since she was a little girl.

Mrs. McClintock was a big, resolute woman, gifted with a large amount of common sense, and a better companion and adviser the bereaved girl could not have found.

She arrived on the next day after the one on which the tragedy occurred.

Being a wealthy woman, without children, she had no family ties to hamper her movements.

Blanche received her with open arms.

Although there was considerable difference in the ages of the eighteen-year-old girl and the fifty-year-old widow, yet they were the greatest friends possible, and the presence of Mrs. McClintock greatly cheered the afflicted girl.

It was just seven days from the one on which the millionaire's death had been discovered.

Mrs. McClintock and Blanche sat in the parlor of the Carmanage mansion.

A couple of the gilded youths of Cincinnati had just made a call upon Miss Blanche to condole with her on account of the affliction which had fallen so heavily upon her young life.

They had just returned to the city, they explained, after a brief absence, otherwise they would have called before.

From the way in which one of the gentlemen spoke, Mrs. McClintock got the idea that he was anxious to win the girl's favor.

This was not at all surprising, for the will of the millionaire had been made public, and among other bequests the sum of five hundred thousand dollars had been left to Blanche.

Not outright, but in trust, she to receive the interest only, and the sum at her death to go to her heirs.

But as the money was placed in secure investments, netting six per cent. interest, she was sure of an income of thirty thousand dollars a year.

And then, too, she had been given the life use of the Carmanage mansion, just as it was at Mr. Carmanage's death.

Therefore it can be readily seen that the girl was a most desirable match for any young man.

"If you have any desire to get married, it seems to me that you will not have to look far to find a husband," the Kentucky widow remarked, after the young men departed.

"I am in no hurry to give up my liberty yet awhile," the young girl replied.

"The right man hasn't come along, eh?"

"Well, if he has, I haven't made up my mind about the matter," Blanche replied.

"I suppose you mean to imply, by speaking in that non-committal way, that there is one of your suitors whom you like a little better than the rest, but you haven't made up your mind in regard to whether you like him well enough to make him your lord and master."

"Yes, that is true."

"Which man is it?"

"Can't you guess?" Blanche asked, with a smile.

"I have seen him, I presume?"

"Yes, you have."

"Well, really, I have not noticed that you treated any one man with particular favor," Mrs. McClintock observed, in a reflective way.

"So I suppose I will have to go on the idea of selecting the most attractive man."

"Yes, that would be a good plan," Blanche assented, with a smile.

"Of course, the man who seems attractive to me, might not appear so to you."

"Very true."

"But I will venture a guess that this young lawyer, Mr. Sangerton, is the man."

The young girl laughed and a slight blush crimsoned her cheeks.

"I have not made a mistake, eh?" the Kentucky widow exclaimed triumphantly.

"No, you are correct," Blanche admitted.

"You have succeeded at the first guess."

"Let me see," Mrs. McClintock remarked in a reflective way. "It seems to me that you didn't say much about him."

"You described all the other gentlemen at length, but, if I remember rightly, you did not say a great deal about him."

"Well, there isn't much to say," the heiress replied.

"His name is Roland Sangerton and by profession he is a lawyer."

"Comes originally from New Orleans, and is a clerk in the office of the lawyers who transacted all my uncle's business."

"Not a rich young man, I should judge?" the Kentucky widow observed.

"No, nor does he even come of a good family—that is as far as he knows, for he is an orphan without any living relatives," Blanche explained.

"His father and mother died of yellow fever in New Orleans when he was about six years old," the heiress continued.

"They were strangers in the city, having resided there only a couple of years, and as they were inclined to be reserved, keeping aloof from the neighbors, no one knew anything about them so as to be able to throw any light upon their former history."

"Under the circumstances then it is not strange that the young man cannot tell anything about his family," Mrs. McClintock observed.

"He certainly seems to be a gentleman though, and I don't believe that he comes of common, low people."

"Neither do I, for he is the equal in every respect to the gentlemen of my acquaintance," the heiress declared.

"Yes, that is my opinion also," Mrs. McClintock assented.

"Of course, he is very far from being a rich man, being only a simple clerk," the young girl remarked with a thoughtful air.

"But his employers speak well of him, and once when I was in the law-office with uncle I heard one of the heads of the firm tell Mr. Carmanage that Mr. Sangerton was one of the brightest young men whom he had ever encountered, and there was no doubt in his mind that he would make a great lawyer."

"That was a strong recommendation," the widow observed.

"Yes, so it appeared to me."

"Well, one thing is certain, if you do come to like the young man well enough to marry him you are well enough off to be able to waive the question of money," Mrs. McClintock observed in a thoughtful way.

"Oh, yes, I have ample, for I am not at all extravagant, and I know that I can live like a princess on a third of my income, and if I put by twenty thousand dollars a year for ten years it will amount to a handsome fortune."

At this point the entrance of a servant interrupted the conversation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG LAWYER.

THE maid bore the message that Mr. Roland Sangerton desired the pleasure of an interview with Miss Carmanage.

The two ladies exchanged glances, then Blanche smiled and told the servant to admit the gentleman.

"He didn't say a private interview," Mrs. McClintock observed. "But I suppose I had better retire."

"Oh, no, I do not think so," the girl replied.

"I do not believe that he can have anything to say to me which he would hesitate to say in your presence."

"Unless he comes to pop the question!" the widow exclaimed, with a good-natured laugh.

The color rose in Blanche's face, and she shook her finger at the lively widow.

"Ah, you know very well that he doesn't come with any such intention!" the young lady declared.

"Oh, I don't know about that," Mrs. McClintock replied.

"The young men of the present generation are so audacious that there is no telling what bold act they may commit."

"I can see, of course, that the young man admires me, but I am quite sure that I have never yet given him sufficient encouragement as to lead him to make a proposal."

"This is a world of surprises, and there is no telling what may happen," the widow remarked.

The entrance of the young lawyer at this point interrupted the conversation.

He was a good-looking gentleman of about

two-and-twenty, or thereabouts, with a dark complexion, and rather small, finely-cut features.

From his appearance the inference seemed plain that he was of foreign descent.

Mrs. McClintock, who was a good judge of nationalities, having traveled extensively, believed the young man to be of French extraction.

He greeted the ladies with the easy politeness which came so natural to him.

"Pardon me for inquiring if it is a private interview which you desire with Miss Carmanage," the widow said. "For in that case I will retire."

"Well, the business upon which I come is very important indeed, but I do not think it will be necessary for you to depart," the gentleman replied in a thoughtful way.

"On the contrary, if my opinion was asked regarding the matter, I should advise that you should remain by all means, as I am satisfied that a lady of your experience and sagacity, will be able to give Miss Blanche good advice," and he concluded the speech with a polite bow.

The widow was of course pleased by the compliment, but remarked that she thought he was flattering her.

"Oh, no!" the young lawyer responded, with another polite bow.

"It is only the simple truth and truth is not flattery, you know," he continued.

"I shall not attempt to argue the point with you," Mrs. McClintock remarked with a smile.

"For you are a trained advocate and I would be sure to get the worst of it," she added.

"As I stated, I have an important matter to discuss," Mr. Sangerton observed.

"Of course, you are aware that I am a lawyer, and in the office where I am employed it is my duty to receive the visitors who come with the idea of employing the firm to conduct their legal matters."

The ladies nodded to show that they comprehended the position.

"Yesterday afternoon a middle-aged woman made her appearance; she was neatly dressed, and seemed to be a person of considerable education and refinement," the gentleman explained.

"She asked to see one of the heads of the firm, as she had an important case to submit."

"I explained that I attended to all business matters, and it would not be possible for her to see one of the firm until I was put in possession of all the facts of the case."

"Then she proceeded to explain."

"It was a very strange story indeed which she told, and she commenced by saying that she would not mention any names, so I could give her an opinion in the matter without being prejudiced."

"It was certainly very mysterious," Mrs. McClintock remarked.

"She was a widow, and had been so for a number of years. She formerly resided at New Orleans, but now for about a year had lived in Cincinnati, where she had made a comfortable living as a dressmaker."

"Shortly after coming to the city, she had made the acquaintance of an elderly gentleman in a singular manner."

"As she detested boarding-houses, she lived in a furnished room, where she got her own meals, and while on her way home one evening, the streets being wet from a rain-storm, she slipped and sprained her ankle."

"The elderly gentleman, happening to be at her elbow, caught her as she fell, and as she was only a few doors from the house where she had her room, he assisted her to her home."

"In this way the acquaintance began, and soon it ripened into a wooing on the part of the gentleman."

"He was a traveling man, he said—a bachelor, and tolerably well off."

"The lady yielded to his solicitations at last, and they were married."

"She was not inquisitive by nature, so believed what her husband said in regard to himself, and made no attempts to pry into his affairs."

"But when the tragedy which occurred in this house was made public, and she read the name and description of the victim—examined the pictures given by the news-

papers, she suddenly woke to the consciousness that the man who had been so foully murdered was her husband."

The ladies were completely surprised by this unexpected disclosure.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HEIRESS SPEAKS.

"WELL, well, I must say that this is about the last thing that I expected to hear!" Mrs. McClintock exclaimed.

"It is a great surprise, truly," Blanche assented.

"I can assure you that I was very much astonished when the disclosure was made, and it was not until her story was completed—not until she had related all the particulars of her marriage, including the name of the clergyman, and an account of how the elderly gentleman and herself had gone to the minister's house—he lived in Covington, Kentucky, a short distance from the bridge, that she made known the name of the man whom she had wedded."

"Well, I really think that this is one of the strangest affairs that ever came to my knowledge," Mrs. McClintock remarked.

"Yes, it is very strange," Blanche assented.

"Of course, as soon as the disclosure was made I was compelled to tell the lady that it would not be possible for my firm to take the case, for we had attended to all Mr. Carmanage's legal business for years, and in the event of a claim being made by anybody against the estate, we undoubtedly would be expected by Mr. Carmanage's niece to look after the matter."

"That was aptly put!" Mrs. McClintock exclaimed.

"It was the truth, of course," the young lawyer remarked.

The ladies nodded.

"And then I expressed to the lady my regret that she had not mentioned names in the first place, for, really, it did not seem quite right for me to listen to her story—get all the points in regard to the evidence she possessed, when it was certain that if there was a fight over the matter I would be against her."

"Well, yes, it is certainly the truth that you were placed in a delicate position," the Kentucky widow observed.

"But it was not your fault," Blanche remarked.

"For it was not possible for you to guess that your firm was at all interested in the matter until the name of the husband was spoken," the girl continued.

"That is the truth," the young lawyer assented.

"I expressed my regrets to the lady, and told her that she could rely upon my keeping the matter a profound secret, but she replied immediately that she did not care how soon her story became public property, for she intended to claim the rights due to her under her marriage—one-third of all the real estate left by Mr. Carmanage."

"Well, that would amount to something," Mrs. McClintock observed.

"But it seems to me that the story which the woman tells is extremely improbable," the widow continued, in a reflective way.

"Mr. Carmanage always passed for a bachelor, and it seems unreasonable to suppose that he would have married this woman secretly in the manner which she relates."

"Yes, it does seem rather out of the way," Mr. Sangerton replied.

"And in as polite a manner as possible I suggested to her that her story was an extremely strange one."

"She did not appear to be at all offended by my frankness, and replied she was aware that the tale did seem to be improbable, but she was satisfied she had not made any mistake about the matter."

"The dead millionaire was her husband, and she was so confident her claim would bear investigation that she was willing to submit all her proofs to me."

"That was certainly frank enough," Mrs. McClintock observed.

"Yes, and it really looks as if the woman feels convinced that she has a just claim," Blanche remarked, in a thoughtful way.

"I submitted the matter to the heads of my firm, and after they consulted in regard to the matter, they came to the conclusion that it would not do any harm for me to

accept the woman's offer, subject, of course, to your approval."

"I think that it is a very good idea indeed!" Blanche declared, immediately.

"For, if the woman's story is correct—if she is the widow of my uncle, I would only be too glad to help her to get what rightly belongs to her," the heiress continued.

"You are willing, then, that I shall look into the matter?" the young lawyer asked.

"Yes, I will be glad if you will do so," Blanche answered.

"Very well, I will attend to the matter, and make my report as soon as possible," Mr. Sangerton remarked, rising to depart as he spoke.

"I will be very much obliged to you indeed!" the heiress declared, gratefully.

"Don't mention it, I beg!" the young lawyer responded as he bowed himself out of the room.

Mrs. McClintock exchanged a meaning glance with Blanche after the door closed behind the gentleman.

"He is deeply interested in you," the lady observed with a smile. "And there is no doubt that you can rely upon him to do his best for you."

"Oh, yes, I think so," Blanche assented with a half-blush.

"I judge from the way in which he speaks that he is rather inclined to believe there is something in this woman's claim," the widow observed, reflectively.

"It seems very incredible, of course, but rich old men have been known to do just such foolish things," Mrs. McClintock continued.

"I did not think Mr. Carmanage was a man of that sort, but a man is a very deceptive animal, and the best judges are apt to be deceived."

"Well, if I am satisfied that the woman's claim is a just one, I will do all I can to aid her," the heiress declared.

"Oh, yes, that is only right," Mrs. McClintock assented.

"But, somehow, I cannot bring myself to believe that Mr. Carmanage would become fascinated with an unknown, struggling dressmaker," the widow continued.

"It does not seem at all probable to me!" the heiress declared.

"Then, too, I know that my uncle was a thoroughly just and conscientious man, and it seems to me that if he had married any woman, no matter if it was in secret, and he considered the woman to be beneath him in station, he would have made some provision for her in his will."

"Yes, that is what he ought to have done," Mrs. McClintock observed.

"Of course, it is possible that he neglected the matter," the widow continued.

"Some men are careless about affairs of this kind. He may have made the will before he became acquainted with this woman, and then neglected to make a new one."

"Yes, that may be so."

"I have an idea!" exclaimed Mrs. McClintock, abruptly. "Let us send for that detective, Mr. Phenix, and get his advice."

CHAPTER XX.

JOE PHENIX ON THE SCENT.

BLANCHE thought that Mrs. McClintock's idea was an excellent one, and it was at once carried into effect.

"There is a telephone at the drug-store, and I will send a message to the chief of police requesting him to ask Mr. Phenix to call upon us," the widow observed.

"Of course, my dear, I have no experience in matters of this kind," she continued.

"But it seems to me that it will not be wise to allow any one to know that we have consulted an expert on this subject if we can possibly keep the affair secret."

The heiress agreed that this was wise, so Mrs. McClintock went to the telephone, "called up" the superintendent of police and informed him that she would like to consult Mr. Phenix upon an important matter.

As it happened, the veteran detective was seated in the office of the superintendent of police at the time, and so the answer was returned that the expert man-hunter would come immediately.

Half an hour later Joe Phenix made his

appearance at the Carmanage mansion, and was at once ushered into the library, where the two ladies were awaiting him.

Mrs. McClintock then explained what had taken place.

Joe Phenix listened attentively and made no comments until the recital was finished.

"I advised Miss Carmanage to send for you so that your counsel in regard to the matter could be had," the widow said in conclusion.

"You see, it seemed to me that it was one of those cases where the services of an expert was needed," Mrs. McClintock added.

"It was a wise move on your part, madam," the detective remarked.

"This is one of the affairs where the services of an experienced man, who has been used to handling such matters, are extremely desirable," Joe Phenix continued.

"What is your opinion in regard to the case?" with all a woman's curiosity.

"I regard the story as being improbable in the extreme," Joe Phenix replied immediately.

"At the same time, because it seems to be very improbable, it will not do to decide off-hand that there isn't any truth in the story."

"Yes, I understand; it may be possible that the story is correct," Blanche remarked, slowly.

"That is right," the detective assented.

"Many strange things happen in this world," he continued. "And it will not do for a man to decide immediately, that a story is false, because it is out of the common run."

"But cases of this kind are happening every day, and there is no doubt that in about nine instances out of ten where a wealthy bachelor dies, and after his death a woman comes forward, claiming to be his wife by a secret marriage, the story is a falsehood, and the woman an adventuress engaged in a conspiracy to seize what does not belong to her."

"Oh, yes, I have often read of such cases in the newspapers," Mrs. McClintock observed.

"And now how would you advise Miss Carmanage to proceed in this matter?" the widow asked.

"Go on just as you have begun," the detective replied.

"Of course, the story is such a strange one that it is only natural that any one interested should have some doubts about the matter."

"If I understood you correctly, Miss Carmanage, the position which you assume is that you are willing to give the woman all she demands when you become satisfied that she is really your uncle's widow?"

"Yes, sir, that is correct," the heiress replied. "I would not for a moment attempt to keep her from enjoying her rights; on the contrary I would do all in my power to aid to prove her claim just as soon as I am satisfied that it is a just one."

"You must instruct your lawyers to that effect," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Tell them that you do not wish to have a contest, but would prefer to settle the matter in an amicable way."

"All you require is to be satisfied that the woman's claim is a just one, and you can say that it seems to you that it will be an easy matter for her to present her proofs so that your lawyers can make an examination, and if their report is a favorable one, you will be glad to do all you can to put the lady in possession of all that is justly due, without putting her to the trouble of going to law about the matter."

"Yes, I am willing to arrange the matter in that way," the heiress remarked.

"And now I wish to call your attention to a most important point," the veteran detective observed.

"Do not tell any one—not even your lawyer, that you have consulted me about the matter, for it is most important that no one should suspect that a detective has been employed on the case."

"Yes, sir, I will be careful to keep the matter secret," Blanche replied.

"To do good detective work it is necessary for the man employed on the job to keep in the background as much as possible," Joe Phenix explained.

"And now another point; as you are a woman, and not used to attending to matters

of this kind, it would be best for you to delegate some gentleman to represent you.

"I will find the man," the detective continued. "But the affair must be arranged in such a way that no one will suspect that this gentleman is not an acquaintance of yours who is attending to the matter solely to oblige you."

"I have an idea!" Mrs. McClintock observed abruptly.

"Blanche and I are great friends, and everybody who knows of my being here, understands that I came on purpose to be of assistance to her."

"What would be more natural than for me, when this case comes up, to tell Blanche that there was a Kentucky friend of mine—a gentleman of experience and wisdom—who would be glad to look after her interests."

"That is a capital scheme!" Joe Phenix declared. "And I have no doubt but that it will work to perfection, particularly as the gentleman whom I will get to attend to the affair will be perfectly competent to play the character of a Kentuckian."

"I will have him call upon you this evening. Major McGoffin is the name he will bear, and you can place implicit trust in him."

Blanche thanked the detective for his kindness, and then Joe Phenix departed.

From the mansion of the dead millionaire he went straight to the office of the superintendent of police, and there to the chief related the particulars of his interview with Miss Carmanage.

"Aha! I fancy that we have got hold of the tail of an extremely large rat here!" the official exclaimed, rubbing his hands briskly together, a sure sign that he was deeply interested.

"Yes, in the beginning there was apparently no reason why any one should want to murder the old man, for the niece seemed to be the only one who would profit by his death, and it was a most impossible thing that a young and innocent girl would enter into a conspiracy against the life of her uncle."

"Yes, yes! I never took any stock in that theory."

"But the appearance of this woman, claiming to be the widow of the dead man, throws a flood of light upon the mystery."

"Oh, yes!" the superintendent assented.

"It is my belief that the millionaire was the victim of a dark conspiracy," Joe Phenix remarked.

"In the background there is a gang of unscrupulous scoundrels, and they coolly planned to murder the millionaire so that after his death the woman could appear, declare that she was his widow, and set up a claim against the dead man's estate."

"I think that you have hit upon the truth, Phenix, although I must say that I am amazed to think that there is a gang in Cincinnati bold enough to try such a desperate game."

"They are probably strangers, for it is my belief that no common gang of scoundrels could have arranged such a job as this."

"Yes, that is correct, I think."

"And although it seems wildly improbable, yet the idea has come to me that it is possible that the Rosaire family, who are mixed up in this vendetta business, are also connected with this plot to get a slice of the old man's fortune."

"Well, it is not impossible," the superintendent remarked, in a reflective way.

"As you observed, no common rascals could hatch a plot of this kind, and this vendetta fellow may have got it up."

"I think we are on the right track now, and unless the men in the background are really superhuman scoundrels, we ought to be able to snare them," Joe Phenix declared, as he rose to depart.

"We will nail them!" the superintendent responded, in the most confident manner, as the veteran made his exit.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MAJOR APPEARS.

JOE PHENIX lost no time in carrying out the scheme which he had arranged.

Being a really marvelous actor, and with wonderful aptitude for assuming all sorts of disguises, he had no trouble in playing the

character of a jolly old Kentucky major to the life.

A man who had been born and brought up in a small country town, but who believed he was uncommonly well versed in the ways of the world, and possessed a high opinion of his own shrewdness.

The lawyers of the dead millionaire, Wendell and Whykell, held a high rank in Cincinnati, but they never did anything in the criminal line, and therefore were pleased that the young heiress had decided to have the case arranged in a quiet manner.

As old Mr. Wendell explained to the supposed Kentuckian:

"We do not like to have anything to do with cases of this kind, and we think that Mr. Sangerton acted very discreetly in handling the matter as he did."

"We have given the case entirely into his hands, and you must consult with him in regard to it."

Mr. Sangerton was not present when the disguised detective arrived at the law-office, but came in just as the old head of the firm finished his explanation.

The young man greeted the Kentuckian in the most friendly manner when he understood the nature of his business.

And in a few well-chosen words he expressed his delight that Miss Carmanage was going to have the advantage of the advice of a man of the major's experience.

Of course, in order to keep up the character which he had assumed, Joe Phenix pretended to be highly pleased by the complimentary words of the young lawyer.

But the expert man-hunter was no vain countryman, and as the old saying has it, with him, "soft words buttered no parsnips."

The speech was designed to flatter him into the belief that the young man was very glad indeed that he was going to have the benefit of his advice.

But the words did not produce that impression on the disguised detective at all.

On the contrary his suspicions were at once aroused.

Immediately he said to himself:

"What is your idea in trying to flatter me? That is not honest! Is it possible that there is some little game which you are trying to play?"

"And if so, what is it?"

"I think I will have to keep my eyes on you, young man," the veteran thief-taker muttered in conclusion.

Mrs. Imogene Carpenter Carmanage, which was the full name of the woman who claimed to be the widow of the dead millionaire, was to call at the lawyer's office at eleven o'clock that forenoon, so Mr. Sangerton informed the Kentuckian.

"After Miss Blanche told me that she would not oppose the woman's claim if she became satisfied that it was a just one I called upon the lady—she had given me her address—and suggested that it would be a good idea for her to come to the office and submit her proofs for inspection."

"It was my idea, you know, to get either Mr. Wendell or Mr. Whykell to act as a sort of referee in the matter."

"Yes, yes, I see," responded the Kentucky major with a wise look.

"But neither one of the gentlemen like to be mixed up in a matter of this kind," the young lawyer explained.

"Of course, if there wasn't any other way to arrange the affair, one of them would act, but your appearance on the scene relieves them from the unpleasant necessity."

"I reckon that I can smell out the truth!" the Kentuckian declared, assuming a wise look, and shaking his head with an air of judicial gravity.

"I am no lawyer, you know, but I do not believe that any one can fool me much, sah, in a case of this kind," the major continued.

"I have no doubt that the lady's lawyer will try to throw dust in my eyes," the Kentuckian added. "Particularly if he is a sharp chap, but I reckon I will be up to snuff all the same."

"She has not employed a lawyer," Mr. Sangerton observed.

"Sho! you don't say so?" exclaimed the major, pretending to be greatly astonished.

"The statement is correct," the lawyer replied. "And from the fact that she had not

secured a legal gentleman to conduct her case, I got the impression that she thought she would not have any trouble proving that her claim was a just one."

"Well, yes, it does kinder look as if she had a deal of confidence," the major remarked with a grave shake of the head, as though he was considerably puzzled over the matter.

"I expressed my surprise when she told me that she hadn't any legal adviser," the young lawyer explained.

"But she appears to be a very innocent, simple sort of woman, and when I told her I was amazed that she had not retained a lawyer to look after her interests, she responded that she did not think she needed a lawyer, for she was satisfied that if any one would take the trouble to listen to her story they would not fail to be convinced that she was telling the truth."

"B'gosh it kinder looks as if the woman thinks she has a dead sure thing of it!" the Kentuckian exclaimed.

"Yes, that is certainly the truth," the lawyer responded.

"Of course, at the beginning, when she began to explain that she had a claim on the estate of the late Mr. Carmanage, I was not at all inclined to place any faith whatever in her statement, but after listening to her plain, straightforward story I was decidedly impressed by the belief that she thought she was telling the truth, and if there was any mistake about the matter she knew nothing about it."

"Bout time for her," the major suggested.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WOMAN'S STORY.

THE hands of the large office clock on the wall pointed to the hour of eleven, and it was the Kentuckian's observation of this fact which caused him to speak.

Hardly had the remark been made when the door opened and a lady made her appearance.

She was a woman of forty-five or thereabouts, apparently, of medium height and with a well-proportioned figure.

She was a brunette, with dark eyes and hair, the locks now thickly sprinkled with gray, and from the darkness of her complexion one would be apt to surmise that there was a good deal of foreign blood in her veins.

She was evidently a lady—a person of refinement and education.

Mr. Sangerton greeted her politely, and introduced the major as being a friend of Miss Carmanage who had been delegated to examine as to the merits of her claim.

The lady, in well-chosen words, expressed her pleasure at meeting the gentleman, and said she would be very glad indeed to relate to him all the particulars of the affair.

And this she immediately did.

The Kentuckian took out his memorandum book and made copious notes as she proceeded.

As we have previously related the woman's story in regard to her acquaintance with and marriage to Stephen Carmanage we will not again detail it, but come at once to the proofs which the woman had as to the truth of her story.

She had been married to Stephen Carmanage by a minister residing in that part of the city known as Cummingsville, the Rev. Mr. Felix Bohn.

She had been taken to the house of the minister by Mr. Carmanage in the evening and the witnesses to the ceremony had been the minister's wife and nephew.

She had her marriage-certificate all made out in due form and the certificate plainly announced in a round clerkly hand that on a certain day the Rev. Felix Bohn had united in the holy bonds of wedlock Stephen Carmanage and Imogene Carpenter.

"Yes, this seems to be all right and regular enough, my dear madam," the Kentuckian remarked with courtly politeness.

"But there isn't anything in this document to show that the Stephen Carmanage who was married to you is the Stephen Carmanage of Walnut Hills, who came to his death in so foul and mysterious a manner."

"You see, my dear madam, that the identity question is one of the main points of this affair," the young lawyer remarked.

"The burden of proof, to use a legal term, is on you to show that there were not two Stephen Carmanages."

"Oh, yes, sir, I understand that," the woman responded in her mild and placid way.

"Of course, I, myself, had no idea that my husband was a wealthy and prominent man until after his death and I saw his picture in the newspapers," she continued in explanation.

"Then I immediately realized that my husband had deceived me in regard to his true condition, and I thought that it was only right that as he had not shared his fortune with me before his death, that I should make an endeavor to obtain what was justly mine."

"I procured a photograph of my husband and visited the minister."

"He is an old gentleman, and did not at first recall who I was, but when I told him that only a short time before he had united me in wedlock to the man of my choice, then he said he remembered me."

"His wife and nephew, the two witnesses to the wedding, were in the room, and they also said they recollected me."

"Then I asked if they remembered my husband. All of them had forgotten the name."

"As the old gentleman explained, being Germans it was not an easy matter for them to readily recall English names."

"Do you think you would be able to recognize the gentleman to whom I was married if you were to see him again?" I asked.

"All immediately answered 'Yes!' without hesitation."

"Oh, we have a good memory for faces!" the old gentleman declared.

"The English names, being so strange to us, we do not remember, but we always remember the faces all right," he continued.

"Both the wife and the nephew also declared that they had excellent memory for faces."

"Of course I am only a simple woman, and do not pretend to know much about such a matter as this one," she continued in an humble way.

"But when I found myself forced to meet this emergency, I tried to recall all that I had ever read upon the subject, and right at the very beginning I came to the conclusion that it might be a very difficult matter for me to prove that my husband, Stephen Carmanage, was the great millionaire who had come to his death in so untimely a manner."

"And after racking my brains for a long time, I came to the conclusion that the minister and his family were the only ones who could prove that it was the millionaire whom I had married."

"But then when I reflected upon the matter the thought came to me that perhaps none of them took enough notice of my husband to be able to identify him, so in order to ascertain the truth about the matter I got my husband's photograph, together with a dozen other pictures of men about Mr. Carmanage's age."

"These pictures I showed to the minister and his family, and asked them if they could pick out the gentleman who married me."

"That was a sharp trick, madam!" the major exclaimed, with an approving nod.

"It was a successful one, for the old minister selected my husband's picture immediately, and the rest all agreed that it was the photograph of the man to whom I had been married."

"It seems to me that this is a mighty strong bit of evidence," the Kentuckian observed, in a reflective way.

"Yes, that is the view which I took of it when the lady told her story to me," the young lawyer remarked.

"Let me see; it is necessary to take out a marriage license in this State before a ceremony can be performed?" the major asked, assuming a judicial air.

"Yes, that is correct," Mr. Sangerton replied.

"If the clerk who issued the license happened to be acquainted with Mr. Carmanage he would be an important witness," the major suggested.

"That is the truth," the young lawyer assented. "And as that idea occurred to me

right in the beginning, I took pains to call upon the clerk for the purpose of seeing what information he could give in regard to the matter."

"How did it pan out?" asked the Kentuckian, evincing great interest.

"I did not succeed in getting any satisfaction," Mr. Sangerton replied.

"The clerk who issued the license is an old man, and inclined to be extremely dogmatic and disagreeable."

"By referring to his book he was able to say that a marriage license had been issued to a man who called himself Stephen Carmanage, but he did not remember how the person looked."

"And he had no personal knowledge of Mr. Carmanage, I suppose?" the Kentuckian remarked, in a reflective way.

"No, he had never even heard of the man," the young lawyer replied.

"But how about the people in the neighborhood of where you lived?" the major asked, assuming a very wise air.

"Didn't any of them become familiar with your husband's appearance so as to be able to give some evidence in regard to him?"

"No, I do not think so," the woman replied.

"We had apartments in a large house on Sixth street, where there was a dozen other tenants, and as both Mr. Carmanage and myself were naturally inclined to be reserved, neither one of us made any acquaintances."

"Then too, as my husband rarely came home until after dark, and went away early in the morning, few of the people in the house ever saw him."

"Well, who engaged the apartments?" the major asked.

"I did, just before the marriage," the woman replied.

"Mr. Carmanage said that he was too busy to attend to the matter, so he instructed me to look for rooms, and to engage them in his name."

"The evidence of the minister and his family, then, is about all that you have to offer?" the Kentuckian remarked.

"Yes, unfortunately for me," the claimant observed in a regretful tone.

"But you see, sir, I never even dreamed that circumstances might arise which would render it necessary for me to prove who and what my husband was."

"Well, madam, it seems to me that you have made out a tolerably strong case," the major said.

"I will go and see the minister," he continued.

"After I have had a talk with him and his family, I will be able, probably, to come to some conclusion in regard to the matter."

"Of course, I may be mistaken, but I am firmly of the opinion, that the Mr. Stephen Carmanage who was so mysteriously murdered, and my husband were one and the same," the woman remarked.

"And if I am correct in my surmise it is only right that I should inherit some of his estate," she added.

"Certainly, madam! that is entirely correct!" the Kentuckian declared.

"And I can assure you that the moment Miss Blanche Carmanage becomes satisfied that there isn't any mistake about the matter she will not only not endeavor to keep you out of what you are justly entitled to, but will do all in her power to aid you to gain possession of your property."

The woman expressed her thanks and departed.

"Now, then, I will try my hand at a little detective business!" the major remarked in a jocose way as he rose to his feet.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOT ON THE TRACK.

"WHAT is your opinion of the case?" the young lawyer asked.

"Well, the woman certainly tells a plain, straightforward story, and she seems to be honest and upright."

"That is the impression I formed. She did not appear to me to be the sort of woman who would come forward and set up a claim of this kind without she was fully convinced

that she was doing what was right," Mr. Sangerton observed.

"I reckon that she has got a tolerably good claim," the major declared with a sagacious nod.

"Of course it looks like a mighty strange thing for a man like old Carmanage to go off and get married to a poor woman in this kind of way, when a fellow as well fixed as he was could have almost taken his pick from some of the best women in the city; but it is my experience that man is a mighty queer animal, and there is no telling what he will do, the Kentuckian declared in an oracular way, and then he took his departure."

He went straight to the minister's house.

Mr. Bohn, with his wife and his nephew, were all at home, and the major had a long conversation with the three.

After the Kentuckian cross-examined them to his heart's content he departed, and took a car for the center of the city.

But before boarding the car he sent a telephone message to the superintendent of police.

So when he descended from the car at Fountain Square, and repaired to a neighboring saloon, he found the police official awaiting him in a private room.

The disguised detective related the particulars of his interview with the claimant.

"Her case depends upon the three witnesses to the wedding," the superintendent observed, in a reflective way.

"Yes, and they are all right."

"Square, eh?"

"As a die!"

"Then her story is correct?"

"I doubt it!" Joe Phenix declared in an emphatic way.

"She has fooled the witnesses?"

"Exactly! that has been the game! The minister and his people are honest folks, but exceedingly dull, and it would not be a hard matter to trick them."

"I see."

"And the widow, while pretending to be very mild and amiable, is a sharp, determined woman, just the kind of one to pull the wool over the eyes of dull, common-place people of this kind."

"How was the game worked do you suppose? Did she get some one to make up like Stephen Carmanage, and have the minister marry her to the man?" the superintendent asked.

"Yes, that was the way the trick was worked, I think."

"It was a good scheme."

"There was an elapse of some months between the marriage and the time when the woman presented the photographs to the people with the request to pick out the picture of the husband."

"Of course, the chances are great that only one picture in the lot at all resembled the old man whom she had married, and so it was not strange that the minister and his folks should pick it out immediately."

"Oh, yes, that little trick could be worked easily enough."

"And now that the three have identified the picture it would take a deal of evidence to make them believe that Stephen Carmanage was not the man who married the woman."

"Yes, yes, that's right!" the superintendent assented.

"Why, to my thinking, the chances are a hundred to one that you could not make them believe there was any mistake about the matter," the chief continued.

"When people of that kind get an idea into their heads it is the deuce and all to get it out, for, from your description it is evident that they are of the obstinate and stolid kind."

"I fancy, too, that in an artful way the woman has given them to understand that if she is successful in getting the money to which she claims to be entitled, she will make them a handsome present."

"Very likely, and an inducement of that kind is a great aid to the memory of a certain kind of people," the superintendent observed.

"Then, too, it seems to me that this lawyer, Sangerton, is taking more interest in the matter than he ought to under the circumstances," Joe Phenix observed, in a reflective way.

"That is certainly the truth."

"Apparently he is actuated by a wish to save Miss Blanche trouble, and is going on the idea that as it is a family matter it had best be kept quiet."

"The young lady, too, is good-hearted, and disposed to do justice, so that if the woman succeeds in making a good showing it is certain that Miss Carmanage will not put any obstacles in her way."

"Is it your impression that the lawyer is in league with the woman?" asked the chief, thoughtfully.

"Yes, it is," the veteran detective responded, decidedly.

"I have not a good opinion of the man, and I think that if we follow the case up closely we will find that he is one of the prime movers in the conspiracy which I feel sure exists."

"The first move of the conspirators was the killing of the millionaire, and when that was successfully executed it rendered it possible for the woman to come forward with the claim that she was the widow of the dead man."

"The evidence which she produces does not amount to much," the superintendent observed.

"And I don't believe she could win her case if she was forced into a court."

"It is the game of the conspirators to get Miss Carmanage to agree to allow the woman's claim without a contest," Joe Phenix remarked.

"And that is where the lawyer gets his fine work in," he continued.

"He knows that the young lady has confidence in him, and he fancies that he has influence enough to get her not to oppose the woman's claim."

"It is a deep game, Phenix, and we must do our best to trap them!" the chief declared.

"You can rely upon me to do my utmost," the veteran man-hunter replied.

"At present we must work for delay. I shall tell the lawyer that I want time to think the matter over, and then I shall try to find out the woman's history."

"Yes, that is a good idea, and if you need assistance call upon me!"

"We must do our level best to nail the game," the chief declared.

This ended the interview and Joe Phenix proceeded to the rooms which he had secured.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DETECTIVE AND THE SPORT.

WHEN the veteran New York detective made his trip to Cincinnati he had not anticipated doing much business.

But as soon as he became interested in the Carmanage murder affair he comprehended that he had become involved in a "celebrated case," and so he at once telegraphed to New York for a trunkful of his disguises to be sent to him.

And by the time the trunk arrived he had secured a couple of rooms in a big barracks of a house on Fifth street, near the market.

There were fully twenty tenants in the house, and in such a human hive the man-hunter knew that it would be possible for him to come and go in a dozen different disguises without being apt to excite any attention.

After reaching his apartment the detective removed his disguise and appeared as his own natural self again.

At three in the afternoon he had arranged to attend to the business which the banker, Horace Latchford, had committed to his care.

As the banker anticipated, the man whom his wife expected to make trouble had begun operations without delay.

Acting upon the detective's instructions, Mrs. Latchford had left her husband's house and gone into hiding.

She had delayed her departure for the West in order to open communication with the man whom she had believed to be dead.

This was a dodge of the detective's to lead the man on.

As Phenix had anticipated, a note came to the banker's wife.

It was carefully written, there not being anything in the letter to excite the suspicions of the banker that there was anything wrong if by any accident it had chanced to fall into his hands.

The note merely said that the writer was an old acquaintance, and would like to have the opportunity to converse with her in regard to a little business matter, and then followed the signature, "Levi Mack."

Acting on Joe Phenix's instruction, the lady wrote in reply saying that she would meet him at any time and place which he might suggest.

To this letter came an answer making an appointment at the Post Office, and stating that in order to avoid a mistake the writer would wear a yellow rose in his button-hole, and carry a letter in his left hand.

He also requested the lady to carry a small bunch of white roses in her right hand.

A reply was immediately dispatched agreeing to the conditions.

And now Joe Phenix started forth to meet the gentleman.

He had a lengthy interview with the banker's wife, who had furnished him with an accurate description of the tramp printer.

As soon as the detective entered the Post-office corridor he caught sight of a man who wore a yellow rose in his button-hole, and carried a letter in his left hand.

But he did not at all resemble the description which the lady had given of Levi McMorrow.

Joe Phenix watched the man for a few moments, and soon became satisfied that he was the one who had come to keep the appointment, for he was plainly on the watch for some one.

"The man has evidently delegated some one to represent him," the detective murmured.

Then Joe Phenix accosted the other, who was no other than Scotty, the gambler.

"I presume you represent Mr. McMorrow?" the man-hunter said.

"Eh?" exclaimed Scotty in surprise.

"I come on behalf of Mrs. Horace Latchford," the detective explained.

"Being a woman she did not feel equal to conducting this business, for she had an idea that it might prove to be disagreeable, and so employed me to attend to the matter."

"Here is my credential," Joe Phenix continued, producing a sheet of note-paper, upon which the banker's wife had written a line stating that the bearer, Mr. Phenix, had authority to act for her.

Scotty read the paper carefully, and then he looked at the detective in a manner which plainly showed that he was not pleased with this arrangement.

"Well, I don't know as I care to talk to you about this matter," he remarked.

"I wanted to see Mrs. Latchford," he continued.

"You are Levi McMorrow, the man who wrote to Mrs. Latchford, I take it?"

"No, I am not."

"Well, if McMorrow, as one principal, can delegate another party to represent him, I don't see why Mrs. Latchford should not have the same privilege."

Scotty shook his head and was evidently at a loss for a reply.

"One thing is certain, if you will not do business with me there will not be any business done," the detective declared.

"I don't think Mrs. Latchford can afford to talk in that way!" the gambler declared, in a menacing manner.

"Well, that is just the way she does talk, whether she can afford to or not!" Joe Phenix retorted.

"I know a nice, quiet little back room, in the rear of a saloon near here, where we can go and converse to our hearts' content, without any danger of being interrupted," the detective continued.

"I mean business, you understand, and I don't think there is any doubt but what we can come to some arrangement."

While the detective had been speaking Scotty had been meditating over the situation, and by the time the speech was finished the sport had come to the conclusion that it would not do any harm for him to hear what the other had to say.

"Well, all right; I don't mind talking the matter over with you," he remarked.

"Come on, then!" the detective observed.

The two proceeded to the saloon where Joe Phenix had made arrangements with the proprietor for the use of a back room.

"Now then, we will get right down to business," the veteran detective said.

"Of course your principal is after money," Joe Phenix continued.

Scotty grinned and nodded assent.

"He has practically deserted his wife for the last ten years, and she, believing him to be dead, was unwise enough to marry again without getting a legal divorce, which she could have had for the asking."

"You see, sir, I do not attempt to conceal any of the facts of the case, for I am one of the men who believes in being open and above-board in a matter of this kind, particularly when there is a remedy at hand to straighten everything out."

The sport looked surprised, and a trifle uneasy.

"The worthless wretch whom you represent doubtless thinks that owing to the circumstances he can levy blackmail on either the unfortunate woman, all of whose early life he ruined, or the man who lifted her to a higher life, not knowing that any legal tie existed binding her to another."

"Of course he thinks he ought to get some money out of the thing!" Scotty exclaimed, in an ugly way.

"And he proposes to make trouble if he doesn't get the money?"

"Yes, he does!" the sport cried, defiantly.

"Now let me show you that you can't work this game."

"As soon as Mrs. Latchford came to the knowledge that her supposed-to-be-dead husband was alive, like a sensible woman, anticipating trouble, she went to Mr. Latchford and told him the whole story."

"Then the gentleman gave the conduct of the affair into my hands—I am a detective-officer."

At this announcement the sport looked decidedly uneasy.

"Mrs. Latchford separated immediately from her husband upon discovering that the man was alive whom she had supposed to be dead."

"Then she waited in Cincinnati long enough to arrange for this meeting, and as soon as the particulars were completed she started for a certain Western State which is noted for the ease with which a divorce can be obtained within its borders."

"There she will remain until a regular legal divorce can be obtained, and then she will return and remarry Mr. Latchford."

"Yes, but we can publish the whole thing in the newspapers, and kick up a big row!" Scotty exclaimed, in exasperation.

"How much money is there in that for either you or McMorrow?" asked the detective, in a quiet way.

"Well, I don't suppose there is any, but we will get some satisfaction out of the thing!"

"Latchford is a man of the world, independent; and able to rise above the shafts of malice," Joe Phenix observed.

"In this affair no blame can really be attached either to him or the woman he married, both he and she at the time believing that she was a free woman."

"But Mr. Latchford is wealthy enough to give you men a stake, not really to buy your silence, but to make you satisfied."

The face of the sport brightened up.

"Now you are talking real, good hard sense!" he exclaimed.

"How much is he willing to give up?"

"One hundred dollars."

Scotty meditated for a moment.

"I don't suppose that it is of any use to attempt to strike him for any more?" he asked.

"No, a hundred is the limit."

"I will take the money, and agree to keep quiet."

"I must see McMorrow."

"I will take you to him in ten minutes."

The sport was as good as his word, and the affair was soon settled, for the tramp printer thought a bird in the hand worth two in the bush.

Joe Phenix had thus brought the matter to a successful conclusion.

CHAPTER XXV.

AN ODD PROPOSAL.

AFTER leaving the pair Joe Phenix walked down Fourth street, and at the corner of Vine encountered the young showman, Alexander Delmay.

The dog-trainer was delighted to meet the detective and greeted him warmly.

"Have you been up to see my dogs yet?" he asked.

"No, not yet. I haven't really had time as I have been very busy, but in a day or two I think I will be able to get an opportunity," Joe Phenix replied.

"Oh, by the way, I have a bit of good news about my sister."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Her husband has been given the management of a large stock farm in Kentucky by his relative in Chicago, and they are going to move there in a few days, so the chances are that they will be all right here after."

"That is good news indeed."

"Yes, and I am so glad that you interfered on that night for I would have surely done something desperate."

"It was fortunate."

"I had a very bad opinion of him at first, for there seemed to be something mysterious about the man, you know, but when he explained about his rich uncle in Chicago, and how necessary it was for him to keep on the right side of him I comprehended."

"Of course," Joe Phenix remarked in a non-committal way.

"Well, come and see the dogs, and when you do come drop around to the back door of the Garden, so I will have a chance to show the beasts to you when they are off the stage."

"Yes, I will."

Then they shook hands and parted.

Joe Phenix turned up Vine, going in the direction of his room, his mind busy with thought.

"What is the meaning of this announcement?" he mused as he proceeded.

"Going to a stock farm in Kentucky?" he continued.

"Is this a device to get the girl out of Cincinnati?"

"The man is leading a double life, I know; now have circumstances arisen so that the girl is in his way while she remains in the city?"

"It really looks like it, and I must try to get on to his game as soon as possible."

"But how can I do it? Ah, that is a difficult question indeed, and at the present moment I don't see just how I will be able to do anything."

"If he was a different kind of a man I might assume some disguise and attempt to worm myself into his confidence, but there is no chance of working a game of that kind with any such man as he is."

"I must watch and wait, depending upon the chapter of accidents to give me a chance at him."

"Meanwhile as I can't go ahead in this direction I will see what I can do in regard to the crooks."

By the time he had come to this conclusion he had arrived at his house, which he entered.

It did not take the detective long to transform himself into the disreputable-looking fellow who had given his name as Barney Mickle.

Then he proceeded to English Kelty's saloon.

The burly Englishman was behind the bar and he greeted the disguised detective with a friendly nod when he entered.

The new-comer approached the bar and called for a glass of beer.

The saloon-keeper served it, and in an undertone, so the other customers in the place could not hear him, said:

"Take your beer into the back room for I have something to say to you, and I will be in there in a minute or two—ss soon as my tumbler juggler comes."

Mickle nodded assent—to prevent confusion we will call the disguised detective by the name which he had assumed—and withdrew into the small room in the rear of the saloon.

In about five minutes the saloon-keeper

made his appearance and took a seat at the table where the shabby-looking crook sat.

"Well, how goes it, my beauty?" the Englishman asked in an extremely friendly way.

"Not very well," Mickle responded.

"Haven't struck anything yet?"

"No, not yet."

"Have you seen Slim Jerry, or the Rat?"

"No, neither of them."

"Do you know, my boy, that I don't take much stock in either one of those two blokes," the saloon-keeper remarked, in a reflective way.

"Well, I don't know much of anything about them, excepting that I have always heard them spoken of as being good men."

"Oh, they know their business, of course," the saloon-keeper responded.

"I am not saying a word against them in a professional way, but from the manner in which they are acting I am not taking much stock in the story they tell about being broke, and anxious to strike a good job."

"Don't you think that it is so?" the other asked, in a tone which seemed that he was much astonished by the speech.

"No, I don't!" Kelty responded, decidedly. "I haven't been keeping a saloon and dealing with these crooks twenty years without getting pretty well used to their ways."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that," the other assented.

"You ought to know them like a book."

"I do, and you can bet your life on it, too!" the Englishman declared.

"Now, then, I know from the way that these two blokes are carrying sail that they ain't particularly anxious to strike a job, and it is my opinion, too, that they are well-heeled as far as money goes."

"What are they giving out the other story for, then?"

"Ah, that is a question!" the saloon-keeper responded, with a sagacious shake of the head.

"There is a reason for it, of course," he continued.

"And as it is my belief that I can see as far into a millstone as the next man, I think I can guess the little game which these men are playing."

"They have just taken a trick, and a big one too, or I am away out in my reckoning," the saloon-keeper added in a very emphatic manner.

"Now, if they sport around town and show that they have money they are afraid the attention of some fly cop will be directed to them."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"So they put on a poor mouth, pretend that they have just come to town, and so think to avoid suspicion."

"It is a good game, but has there been any good jobs worked in this neighborhood lately?"

"What is the matter with this Carmanage case?" the saloon-keeper asked with a significant wink.

"And do you think they had a hand in that?"

"It is just in their line!" Kelty declared.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BARGAIN.

MICKLE meditated over the matter for a few moments.

"I think you are right," he said at last.

"According to the newspaper accounts the job was done by cracksmen who understood their business, and these two pals operate right in that line, but the murder is a puzzle though, for as far as I can see there wasn't the slightest need of their killing the old man, and neither one of the two would be apt to make a blunder of that kind for they are entirely too smart."

"Yes, it is mighty strange," the saloon-keeper asserted. "And it doesn't seem probable that they would make such a mistake."

"I feel sure though that they have made a good haul somewhere lately," he continued.

"It is possible that the job wasn't worked in Cincinnati," Mickle suggested.

"Yes, that is true, and if the pair didn't do the Carmanage trick it is certain that they did not lift a swag here for that is the only job of importance that has been done in this vicinity for some time."

"But now to come right down to business," the saloon-keeper said, abruptly.

"You had a little talk with this pair about going in with them, I believe?"

"Yes, but it did not amount to anything. I could not get any satisfaction out of them."

"They hadn't any job in prospect?"

"No, and although they said they would have to strike something very soon because they were short of cash, yet they didn't know how long it would be, and I might starve while I am waiting for them."

"That is true," the other assented.

Then the saloon-keeper surveyed the crook in a thoughtful manner for a moment or two.

"It strikes me that you are a pretty square sort of a fellow, and will not try a throw-down on a man who is willing to give you a job," he said.

"Oh, you can bet your life that I will do the right thing, every time!" the crook protested.

"And you are not particular as to what the job is, eh?"

"Beggars can't be choosers," the other responded with a grin.

"Well, I think there is a chance for you to pick up a trifle," the saloon-keeper remarked, lowering his voice, and speaking in a confidential way.

"I am just the man to do it."

"I don't know what the job is, or, in fact, anything about it, for I always make it a rule not to inquire into the particulars of these things."

"A cove comes into my place and says that he wants a good man to do a little work for him, and asks me if I can recommend a fellow."

"All I usually say is, 'Give me an idea of what kind of a man you want.'"

"I see," the crook remarked with an approving nod.

"This man is a stranger; I never saw him before, and from the way he talked I have an idea that he will pay you a good price for the work which he wants done."

"He did not beat about the bush, you understand, but came right out."

"I understand that once in awhile men who are a little off-color drop into your place here?" he said.

"Well, a saloon like this one has all kinds of customers," I replied, carelessly, for I didn't know what the man was driving at.

"I want to get hold of a man who is not particular in regard to the kind of job that he does, provided he is well paid for his work. Do you think you can put me on the track of such a fellow?"

"That was coming right down to business," Mickle remarked.

"Oh, yes, there wasn't any nonsense about the man," the saloon-keeper declared.

"I thought of you the moment he spoke, and I told him that I reckoned I knew a cove who would be glad to take any kind of a job, no matter what it was, so long as a good bit of money could be made."

"I pitched the thing strong, you understand."

"That was right—that is the kind of man I am!" Mickle exclaimed.

"If you will drop in to-night, at ten o'clock, the man will be here."

"All right! I will be on hand!"

At this point the conversation was interrupted, by a summons to the saloon-keeper from a man who wanted to speak to him.

"Come at ten to-night, and there isn't much doubt about your getting the job," the saloon-keeper said as the two rose.

"You can bet your life I will take it if there is a dollar in it, no matter what it is!" Mickle declared.

"That is where your head is level!" the old Englishman responded.

Then the crook took his departure.

After he got into the street the disguised detective meditated over the situation.

"Is it wise for me to go on with this unknown?" he murmured, as he walked in the direction of his room, communing with himself as he proceeded—after the fashion common to him.

"This is a side issue and may take up too much of my time, still as I really haven't much to occupy me just at present, perhaps I will be able to attend to this affair without being compelled to neglect anything else."

"Anyway, it will not do any harm to have

a talk with the man, so as to see what rascality he is meditating."

Acting on this idea the disguised detective made his appearance in English Kelt's saloon a few moments before ten o'clock that night.

"He hasn't showed up yet," the saloon-keeper remarked.

"I'll take a beer while I wait," the crook responded.

And just as he had emptied the glass a rather tall man, with a full, black beard and hair, worn longer than is common, somewhat roughly dressed, having the appearance of a sailor, entered the saloon.

At the first glance Mickle conjectured that the man was wearing a disguise.

It was his supposition that the beard was a false one; he also conjectured that the man wore a wig.

And as the bushy beard concealed all the lower part of his face, while the soft, slouch hat which he wore, pulled low down on his forehead, hid one-half of the upper part, it was apparent that no one could form much idea of what the face would look like if the hat, wig and beard were removed.

The moment the man made his appearance Mickle had at once jumped to the conclusion that he was the stranger who was in search of a willing tool.

This conjecture was correct, for, when the stranger approached the bar and spoke to English Kelt, the saloon-keeper at once introduced him to Mickle.

"This man will fill the bill, I think," the old Englishman remarked.

"His name is Barney Mickle," the saloon-keeper continued.

The stranger said that he was glad to make Mr. Mickle's acquaintance, and suggested that they take a walk together.

The crook was willing, of course, and the two left the saloon.

They went down the small side street upon the corner of which the saloon was situated.

The street was deserted and the stranger remarked that they could talk business without any danger of their conversation being overheard.

"Now, I will come right down to business," he announced.

"Are you willing to undertake to do any kind of a job no matter what it is, so long as you get a good price for it?"

"Yes, that is the kind of man I am!" Mickle replied, promptly.

"Any objection to giving a man or woman a speedy dispatch to the other world?"

"None at all, provided I am paid a good stake, and the job is so arranged that there is a chance for me to get off without being nabbed."

"I will fix the thing so there will not be any trouble in regard to that," the stranger responded.

"And the price for the job will be two hundred dollars."

"That is satisfactory, provided that the risk isn't too great."

"Well, it is my opinion, from the way in which I have arranged the matter, that there isn't any risk at all."

"That is good!" the crook exclaimed, rubbing his hands together, gleefully.

"A job of this kind is just what I am looking after, and you can bet your life that I will work the trick to the queen's taste."

"You can get your two hundred cases together, for I am ready to take them as soon as you like, and the quicker the better."

"How will to-morrow night suit you?"

"That will do."

"I have planned the affair so the job can be worked at night."

"That is a good idea, for the darkness gives a chance for a man to escape."

"Yes, I took that into account in my calculation."

"Now then this is the game."

"The party to be put out of the way is a woman who lives in a busy part of the city."

"She occupies apartments in a tenement-house, but as it happens she is the only inmate of the dwelling at present, the rest of the people in the house having moved."

"That is good!" the crook exclaimed.

"Yes, all the conditions are favorable. The lock upon the outside door is a common one and I have secured a key which

will open it, also a key which will unlock the door of the woman's apartment."

"Why! that makes the thing as easy as rolling off a log!" the other exclaimed.

"The scheme is a good one; there is no mistake about that," the stranger assented.

"As a rule the woman goes to bed about ten o'clock."

"Keeps good hours," suggested the crook with a grin.

"Oh, yes. Now then if you make your way into the house between twelve and one, the chances are big that you will find the woman buried in a deep sleep."

"Yes, yes, not much doubt about that!" the other assented.

"If anybody goes to bed about ten o'clock the odds are a thousand to one that they will be in the deepest kind of a sleep by midnight."

"Exactly! that is my calculation."

"Now then, it is my idea to have the job done as quietly as possible. No knife no violent attack, but I will provide you with a sponge and a bottle of chloroform."

"Oh, yes, I see the game!" the crook exclaimed with an approving nod.

"All I have got to do after I get into the room where the woman lies asleep, is to fill the sponge with chloroform and hold it to her nose until she is a goner."

"That is the game!" the stranger replied.

"Of course you must be careful to hold it to her nose long enough to produce death, for a mere stupor from which she would recover wouldn't answer."

"Don't you worry about that!" the crook exclaimed in a confident way.

"I will not make any mistake, but will hold the sponge to her nose until she is as dead as a door nail."

"In her pocketbook you will find a hundred dollars," the stranger explained.

"I will be waiting for you at the door of the room, and after the job is done will pay over the second hundred."

"Yes, that is a good way to arrange the thing."

"You are willing to do the job?"

"You bet I am!"

"Then you can consider the matter settled and I will meet you at the corner of Central avenue and Tenth street at twelve o'clock to-morrow night."

"I will be there, prompt to the minute." Then the two parted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED DISCLOSURE.

THE two had halted upon a corner to conclude their conversation, and when it was ended, the crook turned and retraced his steps toward the saloon while the stranger kept on down the street.

It was late and the thoroughfare was deserted.

Not a soul did the disguised detective see as he proceeded on his way.

Yet the footsteps of himself and companion had been followed.

Two men had tracked the pair.

They were upon the opposite side of the street, and were careful to keep so far in the rear that it was hardly possible for either of the two whom they were tracking to discover that they were being followed no matter how careful the pair might be to keep on their guard against shadowers.

The two did not appear to desire to come near to the pair, only to keep them in their sight.

When the stranger and the crook halted upon the corner the watchers immediately took refuge in a doorway from whence they peered out cautiously at the two.

And as the crook came upon the street they shrunk within the doorway, concealing themselves so well within the gloom that the sharpest pair of eyes could not have detected their lurking figures.

The two waited until the crook passed their hiding place, then they came out and stole with noiseless tread down the street, following in the footsteps of the stranger.

They hurried along at a good pace and in the course of a couple of blocks succeeded in coming up to the man, still keeping on the opposite side of the street.

The stranger's attention was attracted to the pair and he glanced in a suspicious way at them.

As he did so, too, he thrust his hand into the side-pocket of the loose rough coat which he wore, evidently to grasp a weapon.

The two were quick to note the movement and they grinned at each other.

Then the pair cast a quick glance around.

The street was deserted.

Not a soul was in sight.

"Hey, old pal!" called out the taller of the two.

It was the cracksman, Slim Jerry, whose acquaintance the reader made in the first chapter of our tale.

His companion was the redoubtable Tommy, the Rat.

The stranger halted, faced toward the pair and regarded them with a suspicious glance as they came slowly across the street.

His right hand was still in the pocket of his coat, and neither of the pards had any doubt but what the hand grasped a pistol.

"What do you want?" asked the stranger, and from the way in which he spoke it was plain that he regarded the pair with a considerable amount of distrust.

"We want to have a little talk with you," Slim Jerry replied.

By this time the two were near the curbstone, and within a yard or so of the stranger.

"And you need not be alarmed in regard to us," the cracksman continued.

"Though we are 'cross' men both of us, and take pleasure in having the reputation of being at the top of the heap, yet we will deal on the square with you."

"Our purpose is to do you a service."

The stranger glanced at the pair with a suspicious look and shook his head.

"I don't see how you can do me a service," he said.

"Maybe we cannot, but I think we can," Slim Jerry replied.

"Of course we don't know anything about you, but my pal and I happened to be in the Englishman's saloon when you came in to-night, and when we saw Kelt introduce you to this Barney Mickle, as he calls himself, we had an idea that you were a stranger who had some notion of doing business with this Barney."

A look of surprise appeared on the man's face, and he regarded the pair more suspiciously than ever.

"Well, what is it to you whether I am going to do any business with the fellow or not?" he asked.

"Oh, it isn't any of our business, of course," Slim Jerry answered.

"But we have taken it upon ourselves to poke our noses into the matter, not that we care particularly about you—why should we, seeing that you are a stranger?"

"Yes, it is not natural that you should," the other remarked.

"But we have got it in for that son of a gun!" the Rat exclaimed.

"That is the idea!" Slim Jerry assented.

"We are dead sore on that bloke, and we want to give him a lick if we can."

"You bet!" cried the Rat, with a malignant scowl.

"What has that got to do with me?" the stranger demanded.

"A good deal if things are as I think they are," Slim Jerry replied.

"This fellow, Barney Mickle, as he calls himself, pretends to be a crook, and me and my pal here got the idea that you were making a bargain with him to do some crooked job for you."

"Is that straight, stranger, or ain't it?" the wily crook demanded.

"Well, supposing that it is?" the other asked.

"Then you are being led into a trap, for this fellow is a detective in disguise," Slim Jerry replied.

The stranger started in amazement.

"You don't mean it?" he exclaimed, evidently much agitated.

"It is a fact, and you would be safe in betting all the ducats that you will ever get in this world on it!" Slim Jerry asserted.

"He is Joe Phenix, one of the cutest detectives in the country!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DARK DETERMINATION.

THE stranger meditated over the matter for a few moments, a dark and angry scowl upon his face.

"I don't know anything about the man," he said at last. "But, then, there isn't anything strange about that, for all I know about detectives is what I have read of them in the newspapers."

"Well, sir, this man is away up at the top of the heap in the detective line," the tall cracksmen explained.

"He is not a Cincinnati man at all, you understand," Slim Jerry continued.

"Then he is not on the force in this city?" the stranger asked.

"Oh, no!" the cracksmen replied.

"He is one of the tip-toppers from New York," the Rat added.

"We know the man like a book—you can bet your life on that!" Slim Jerry declared.

"Oh, yes, we know him to our cost, curse him!" the other crook remarked with ferocious emphasis.

"You have had dealings with him, then?" the stranger questioned.

"Oh, yes; through him both my pal and I were compelled to take a trip to the Stone Jug, and you can bet your life that both of us are dead sore on him."

"And that is the reason why we have gone out of our way to give you this tip," the Rat explained.

"As I said in the first place, we don't know who you are, or anything about you, but when we saw you go off with this fly cop in disguise we came to the conclusion that he was trying to play some little game, and we made up our minds to block it if we could," Slim Jerry explained.

The stranger's brows were knitted in meditation, and it was apparent that he was much disturbed.

"I am much obliged for your warning," he said. "And I don't mind telling you that I made a bargain with the man to do a job for me, thinking he was a fellow that I could depend upon."

"It was a 'plant' to catch you in a trap," Slim Jerry asserted.

"But I thought English Kelty could be trusted, and he told me that he believed the fellow to be a good man," the stranger remarked.

"Well, the explanation is that the man was smart enough to pull the wool over Kelty's eyes," Slim Jerry grinned.

"It is just as I tell you about the cove; he is one of the best detectives in the country, and what he doesn't know about man-hunting isn't worth knowing," the cracksmen continued.

"He fooled English Kelty into believing that he was a low-down crook in hard luck, anxious for a job."

"Yes, the saloon-keeper is square enough as far as he is concerned," the Rat added.

"He introduced the bloke to us as a man who was anxious to get a job, and wasn't particular as to what it was."

"We were too fly for the man though!" Slim Jerry exclaimed with a chuckle.

"Oh, yes, we spotted him, arter we had talked a couple of times with the cove," the Rat added.

"His get-up is just splendid too," Slim Jerry remarked.

"But both my pal and myself are mighty sharp-eyed, and the deal that we had with this fly cop in New York was such as to make us pretty certain to spot the man no matter how carefully he might disguise himself."

"What do you suppose brings the man to this city?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, he is on some lay, of course," the cracksmen replied.

"That is evident from his going round in disguise, pretending to be a crook," Slim Jerry continued.

"It is my idea that he is trying to work up this big murder case—this 'ere Carmanage business," the Rat observed.

"I should not be surprised if that was correct," the other cracksmen assented.

"A mysterious case like this murder would be just the kind of one that he would like to handle."

"And I suppose that when he found he could play me for a flat, he went into the

game just for the sake of keeping his hand in," the stranger observed.

"Yes, that is about the idea," Slim Jerry assented.

"I would like to get a chance to get square with the man," the stranger remarked, in a vindictive way.

"I hate all these detectives on general principles, anyway," he added.

"What do you say—will you two go in with me to do up this bloodhound?"

The cracksmen shook their heads in a dubious way.

"What are you afraid of?" the other asked. "Surely we three ought to be able to lay out this one man, although he is a good, big fellow."

"Oh, yes, we ought to be able to do it," Slim Jerry assented.

"And I don't mind saying to you that if the chance came in my way to give this infernal fly cop a lick which would settle his account in this world, I would be mighty apt to do it," the veteran crook continued.

"Me, too!" his pal declared. "I wouldn't hesitate for a second in sticking a knife into him if I had a good show to do the trick and get off without being nailed."

"Well, can't we put our heads together and fix up some trap to catch him?" the stranger asked.

"It would be a mighty risky piece of work," Slim Jerry declared.

"Of course, as you do not know anything about the man, you can't comprehend just what sort of a born devil he is," the cracksmen continued.

"He isn't any more than mortal, and therefore can be got at, if care is taken to go about the job in the right way," the stranger argued.

"Yes, that is true, of course, but the trouble is to find out just the right way," Slim Jerry remarked.

"You see, being intimately acquainted with the man, I am posted in regard to some things about him that no stranger could possibly catch onto, and one of the things is that although many desperate and determined men have endeavored during the last ten or fifteen years to lay out this human bloodhound, not a soul of them ever succeeded in damaging him."

"That is the truth," the Rat assented.

"No mistake about that," he continued.

"And though I think I am as game as they make 'em, I ain't anxious to stack up against no Joe Phenix."

"Neither am I," Slim Jerry declared.

"So, stranger, if you are anxious to get hunk, you will have to pull the trick off yourself; solong!"

And the crooks departed.

The stranger went on down the street, deep in meditation.

"Can it be possible that this bloodhound has been able to hit off the right scent?" he muttered. "It seems too improbable to be true, but he must die, for I cannot risk it."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ATTACK.

DURING the day which followed the night when the events detailed in our last chapters took place, the veteran New York detective busied himself in making preparations to entrap the stranger who had in so cool a manner arranged for the murder of the unknown woman.

Of course, under the circumstances, it was not possible for the detective to guess that the secret of his disguise had been revealed to the man whom he was preparing to arrest.

So he went on arranging the details, his idea being to take the fellow in such a way that there would not be any difficulty in securing his conviction.

And when the midnight hour approached the man-hunter, disguised as the crook, turned from Fifth street into Central avenue.

It was exactly a minute to twelve when the disguised detective approached the meeting-place.

He was proceeding at a slow pace, as he knew he was ahead of time.

Just as he stepped upon the curbstone on the upper side of the street a sharp report

rung out clear and shrill on the still air of the night.

The disguised detective wheeled around and a pistol flashed in the rays of the gas-light.

But no foe was in sight.

Then the man-hunter clapped his hand to his side, uttered a groan, as though he was in great pain, and sunk to the ground.

The shot had apparently been fired by some one on the opposite side of the street.

The assassin was probably concealed in a doorway, for no one was visible.

Then came three men, making their appearance so suddenly that it seemed as though they had sprung from the ground.

Although dressed in plain, dark suits, presenting the appearance of common citizens, yet from the brisk, business-like way in which they proceeded to search for the person who had fired the shot, it was apparent that the three were officers in plain clothes.

First the three ran to the fallen man.

"The shot came from the other side of the street—search the doorways," the disguised detective exclaimed as the trio came up to him.

The search was prosecuted with all possible vigor, for the men were old hands at this sort of thing, being three of the best detectives that Cincinnati could boast.

The search was an unsuccessful one though, for not the slightest trace of the party who had fired the shot could be found.

And as the three detectives had made their appearance so quickly, it was evident that no time had been allowed for the firer of the shot to escape.

So it was evident that the pistol must have been discharged from an open doorway, then the assassin retreated into the entry, closing the door after him so as to baffle investigation, or, possibly, the shot was fired from behind the blinds of one of the windows.

But as there was not the slightest thing to give the detectives a clue to the right house they were utterly at fault.

It only took the three a few minutes to come to the conclusion that the unknown assassin had succeeded in masking his retreat so cleverly that they would not be able to get at him.

Then they returned to the wounded man.

There was a gas-lamp on the corner, and the disguised detective had risen to a sitting position, leaning his back against the iron post.

"The fellow has managed to get away somehow," one of the detectives remarked.

"Are you badly hurt?" questioned a second.

"Yes, I think I am," the disguised detective replied.

"We had better summon an ambulance then," the third detective suggested.

"I think it would be as well," the injured man answered.

One of the detectives immediately hastened to the nearest druggist's and "called" the ambulance by the aid of the telephone.

The man-hunter closed his eyes, and as he leaned against the lamp-post, seemed to be half-insensible.

So the detectives came to the opinion that he must be pretty badly hurt, and they shook their heads as they looked at each other.

Joe Phenix was not an easy man to read though, and anybody who imagined they could penetrate the veteran's thoughts by surveying his face, would be apt to only have their labor for their pains.

On the present occasion, although the man-hunter was apparently half-insensible, yet his busy brain was working with its usual rapidity.

The moment the shot was fired, Joe Phenix realized that he had fallen into a trap.

The tables had been abruptly turned, to quote the old saying.

While trying to lead the stranger into a snare he had fallen into one himself.

There was not the least doubt in the mind of the veteran sleuth that it was the mysterious stranger who had fired the shot.

But the reason for the attack?

There must be some strong motive, or else the man would not have attempted such a deed.

First and foremost, Joe Phenix was satis-

fied that the man really wished a woman killed, and he thought he knew who that woman was, too.

The agreement in regard to the murder was made in perfect good faith by the stranger, but in the interim which intervened between the making of the arrangements for the murder and the time set for the execution of the deed, some one had revealed to the stranger that the supposed crook was a bloodhound in disguise.

Who had done this?

Rapidly the veteran detective revolved the situation in his mind as he put the question.

How many men were there in Cincinnati well enough acquainted with him to be likely to recognize him in spite of his disguise?

The two pals, Slim Jerry, and Tommy, the Rat, at once came to his mind.

Both of the crooks knew him.

Both of the rascals had strong reason for hating him.

Was it not likely then that one of the two had succeeded in recognizing him, in spite of his disguise, and, actuated by a spirit of malice, seeing him in conversation with a stranger, had revealed to him that he was a man-hunter?

It was a reasonable explanation, and it did not take a sagacious man like the veteran detective long to come to the conclusion that he had hit upon the truth.

"The rascals have succeeded in spoiling my game, but there is no doubt that I will be able to pay this little debt with compound interest before many months have come and gone," the detective muttered.

The approach of the ambulance put an end to his meditations.

On the next morning the citizens of Cincinnati were informed through the columns of the daily newspapers that Mr. Joseph Phenix, the celebrated New York detective, had been so badly wounded by the pistol-shot of an unknown assailant that his life was in danger, for it was the opinion of the doctors at the hospital, to which the hurt man had been carried, that the wound would prove to be a fatal one.

The newspapers then gave a full account of the assault, winding up with the statement that, although the detectives had made an exhaustive search, yet they had not been able to discover the slightest clue to the doer of the deed.

And the man who had coolly planned the murder, and from behind the blinds of the window of the furnished room which he had hired, so he might ambush the detective, fired the shot which laid Joe Phenix low, chuckled merrily as he read the newspaper account.

"It is the old story!" he exclaimed. "The best way to throw the bloodhound off the scent is to kill the dog!"

CHAPTER XXX.

ANOTHER DISGUISE.

APPARENTLY the unknown stranger had succeeded in securing a most important advantage when Joe Phenix fell by his bullet, and it was no wonder that he chuckled with delight when he reflected upon how easily he had disposed of the man hunter who had managed to get upon his track.

There was no danger to be expected from the detective lying badly wounded in the hospital.

If the man had been a regular old crook, though, with years of experience of detectives and their ways, he might not have felt so complacent over the matter, for he would have understood that the wily detectives are slippery customers.

Then, too, it is not always safe to believe all the stories which are published in the newspapers.

By skillful playing, the unknown had succeeded in securing the first trick in the game, and while Joe Phenix was quite willing to admit that this was the truth, yet he went to work to render it impossible for the man to take another.

As soon as the shot was fired Joe Phenix realized that he had fallen into a trap, and guessed immediately, too, that the man whom he was trying to snare had turned the tables upon him.

At once he determined to play a trick

upon the unknown, by pretending to be badly wounded.

If he was in the hospital, stretched upon the flat of his back, with a prospect of death soon seizing upon him, it was certain that the unknown villain would be apt to think there was no more danger to be apprehended from him.

Then he might grow careless and make some uncautious move which would give the acute detective a chance at him.

The stranger was a good shot, and it was not through any fault of his that the bullet had not inflicted a mortal wound, for it was sent with a true aim.

It was a common belief among the crooks that Joe Phenix bore a charmed life.

Many a pistol-shot, and many a desperate knife-stroke had he escaped, and it was a source of wonder to the crooked fraternity that some of these violent attacks had not succeeded.

Few of the rascals were wise enough to suspect that Joe Phenix owed his marvelous escapes from pistol-shots and knife-strokes to the fact that he wore next to his skin a shirt of mail.

It was an article which the veteran detective had picked up during a European trip.

It was made of steel rings, curiously linked together, perfectly flexible, yielding to every motion of the body, and not particularly cumbersome to wear.

It was a perfect protection against a knife-stroke, and a revolver-ball could not do much more than penetrate it, and then, the force of the ball being broken, only a slight flesh wound would be the result.

In this case, as the pistol was discharged at a considerable distance, the ball did not penetrate the shirt of mail, only inflicting a bad bruise.

It was just over the heart, though, and so the shock was a severe one, forcing the detective to the ground.

As soon as Joe Phenix reached the hospital he explained the situation to the superintendent, who readily enough agreed to assist him in his scheme of deception.

So, when the reporters came in haste to the hospital, which they did as soon as the news of the assault reached them, they were all told that the condition of the wounded detective was so serious that the doctors did not deem it wise to allow any one to see him.

And in this way the Argus-eyed news-gatherers were completely deceived, and so it came about that the false statements in regard to Joe Phenix's condition were published.

The detective was a man who had a marvelous faculty for playing many parts, as the reader who has followed his fortunes knows full well.

And so while he was supposed to be lying helpless in the hospital, in reality he, in disguise, was preparing to entrap the man who had attempted to slay him.

Joe Phenix had assumed one of his favorite disguises, that of the German professor.

He wore a sober suit of black, rather the worse for wear, and yet not shabby, with a long-haired wig of flaxen hue, the hair slightly curling at the ends, and pushed back behind the ears.

The wig, coming low down on his forehead, and the old-fashioned spectacles which he wore, completely changed the appearance of his face.

Naturally the detective had a lion-like head, and any one who had skill in reading men's characters could have told at a glance that Joe Phenix was a born leader.

But after he assumed the German professor's disguise he appeared like a mild, innocent old bookworm, and so complete was his assumption of the character that it would have taken a shrewd man indeed to have guessed that he was a bloodhound in disguise.

After completing his preparations, Joe Phenix sent a message over the telephone requesting the chief of police to meet him in the private room of the saloon where he had had his former interview with the superintendent.

Joe Phenix realized that the man whom he was trying to entrap was a remarkably acute fellow, and he thought it might be possible

that he was the leader of a gang, and some one of the band, possibly, would be deputed to keep a watch on the chief of police's visitors.

It will be seen that the man-hunter did not intend to throw a chance away.

The chief was surprised by the story that the veteran detective told, but when Joe Phenix explained his plans he expressed his satisfaction and said he thought the chances were great the scheme would be a success.

Joe Phenix explained what assistance he required, and the superintendent willingly agreed to do all in his power to aid him in his plans.

"The man is a skillful rascal—a desperate one too, but I think I can trap him," the veteran sleuth declared in conclusion.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A REVELATION.

AFTER leaving the superintendent of police, the disguised detective proceeded to the Summer Garden on Vine street, where the young man, Alexander Delmay, was exhibiting his troupe of performing dogs.

As it was only about ten o'clock, the detective knew that if he succeeded in finding Delmay he would not be busy, and he would have an opportunity to talk to him.

Delmay was in the garden, seated at one of the tables, conversing with the proprietor of the place, a fat, jolly-looking Dutchman, when the detective arrived.

Just as the man-hunter approached the pair, the proprietor was summoned to the saloon, so Joe Phenix got an opportunity to speak to the young man in private, for there was no one else in the neighborhood.

The detective's disguise was so good that the young man greeted him as a stranger.

Great was his astonishment when Joe Phenix revealed who he was.

"I never should have recognized you!" Delmay exclaimed.

"That is as it ought to be," the man-hunter replied, with a smile.

"If a man in my line of business is not an adept in assuming all sorts of disguises, he would not be able to achieve much success."

"Oh, there isn't any doubt about that being the truth," the young showman remarked.

"I read the account of your having been wounded in the morning newspapers," he continued.

"And I can assure you I felt much concerned about the matter," he added.

"I visited the hospital this morning for the purpose of seeing if I could be of any use to you."

"You see, sir, you did me a good service, for which I am truly grateful, and I was anxious to show my gratitude if there was any chance for me so to do."

"I am much obliged to you just the same," the detective observed.

"They would not allow me to see you, and I came away feeling very much dissatisfied."

"That was a part of the programme," the man-hunter explained.

"If the man whom I am after believes that I am lying at the hospital at the point of death he may relax in his caution and I will be able to get a chance at him."

"Oh, yes, I understand the game now!" the showman exclaimed.

"Now, to come to business. You wanted me to find out what sort of a man your sister's husband is?"

"Yes, I am very anxious about the matter, for I will admit to you that I am afraid that all is not right."

"Well, I regret to be obliged to say that I think it is very probable that the man is an utter scoundrel," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Ah, yes, I feared as much!" the young man declared with a melancholy shake of the head.

"Now, then, can I depend upon you to restrain your feelings, and listen with calmness to what I am about to say?" the detective asked.

"Oh, yes!" the youth answered, quickly. "I know that I am quick-tempered, but I can assure you that I am prepared to hear the worst, and will listen with calmness."

"I am well-satisfied that this man is a

scoundrel, and your sister is in danger as long as she remains with him."

"Yes, yes, I had an apprehension that he was not all right, but as my sister has the most perfect faith in him I do not suppose I will be able to make her believe that he is a villain."

"Possibly events will so shape themselves that she will be forced to come to a knowledge of the truth, no matter how strong may be her desire to believe the fellow to be a gentleman and an honest man," Joe Phenix observed.

"I sincerely hope that you are right!" the young man exclaimed, fervently.

"I think that with your aid I can succeed in entrapping the man and showing him up in his true colors."

"You can command me, for I will do all that I can to help you!" the showman exclaimed, immediately.

"Will you be at liberty to give some time to this purpose?"

"Oh, yes," Delmay replied. "I am my own master now. I closed my engagement here last night."

"Business has not been good," the showman explained. "And so it became necessary for the manager to cut down expenses."

"He was giving me more money than he could afford to pay, and as I am inclined to be an easy sort of a fellow, I never hold a man to a bad bargain."

"The old fellow means well, and when he showed me how he was situated I was willing to let him off."

"Then you are at liberty to devote all your time to this affair?"

"Yes, and I will be glad to do so."

"That is good," the detective remarked.

"Now then, I will explain how the matter stands."

"In the first place, I feel pretty well assured that it was your sister's husband who attempted to kill me."

The young man was amazed at this statement, and said as much.

Joe Phenix then related all the particulars of his meeting the stranger, and the bargain which he had made with him.

"He was carefully disguised," the detective said, in conclusion.

"But, notwithstanding that fact, I am satisfied that he is the same man whom your sister called Robert Cummings and declared to be her husband."

"If this is the truth, he is indeed the vilest kind of a villain!" the young showman exclaimed.

"Yes, there isn't any doubt about that," Joe Phenix assented.

"But why should he desire the death of this poor girl, who never did harm to any one, but loved and trusted him?" Delmay asked, with a puzzled look.

"Well, there is a motive, of course, and a strong one, or else he would not attempt to play such a desperate game," the detective remarked in a reflective way.

"You see, I am working in the dark, for, with a man of this sort, who covers his tracks so carefully, it is not an easy matter to get at his plans."

"But from certain facts that have come to my knowledge, I have a suspicion that the man has formed a scheme which he cannot carry out as long as your sister is alive."

"Although a desperate and determined fellow, yet he had some slight repugnance about staining his hands in the blood of the woman who trusted him, and so he resolved to hire the deed committed."

"Her death is necessary to the success of his plans, and there is no doubt in my mind that he will make another attempt to get rid of her."

"The infernal villain!" the brother exclaimed in righteous wrath.

"You have characterized him truly," Joe Phenix remarked.

"And now it must be our game to form a plan so as to not only prevent the murder, but make a prisoner of the man in the act of attempting the crime, in order that he may be brought before the bar of justice and punished."

"Yes, that is the way the matter ought to be arranged," the youth assented.

"I think it can be done," the detective remarked.

"You are in the habit of visiting your sister?" he asked.

"Yes, two or three times a week."

"I believe she is now the only occupant of the house where she has her apartments?"

"That is correct."

"And the other rooms in the house are to rent?"

"Yes."

"That affords me the opportunity that I require," the detective explained.

"She has the front room and bedroom on the second floor, and there is a door which leads from the main room to a similar apartment in the rear."

"That rear apartment I am going to hire, and by means of some holes bored in the door I think I can keep a watch, so that if this scoundrel attempts to harm your sister I will be able to interfere."

"That is an excellent idea!" the dog-trainer exclaimed.

"I will take possession of the apartment after dark, and as I can get on without any furniture, a blanket and a camp-chair being all I will require, neither your sister nor this fellow, whom I am anxious to trap, will have any suspicion that there is anybody in the house."

"Yes, I understand your idea," the young man remarked.

"He will go ahead with his schemes in the belief that there isn't any one in the neighborhood to interfere with him."

"It is not my impression that this man will resort to any open violence," Joe Phenix explained.

"And it is important for him too, to arrange the matter so that he will not be brought prominently before the public in conjunction with the affair."

"You see, it is necessary for him to keep in the background as much as he can just at present."

"Yes, I should suppose that to be the case," the other remarked.

"Now then, I want you to get your sister out for a walk this afternoon, say about two o'clock."

"Continue to keep her out for a couple of hours, so as to give me a chance to operate on the door, for I can't do it while she is in her apartment."

The young man said he would arrange the matter, then the detective made an appointment to meet Delmay in the neighborhood of the old house at seven that evening and took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PLAYING THE SPY.

FROM the Summer Garden the veteran detective proceeded to the real estate agent who had charge of the house wherein the dog-trainer's sister had found shelter.

The agent gladly rented the two rear apartments to the supposed German.

The disguised detective got the keys and departed.

A little before two o'clock he entered the beer-saloon on the opposite side of the street, which was a few doors above the house which he designed to turn into a rat-trap.

He called for a glass of beer, and sat down at a table by the window so he could keep a watch on the opposite side of the street.

At exactly two o'clock the dog-trainer entered the house.

Fifteen minutes later he departed with his sister.

The disguised detective finished his beer, a second glass of which he had ordered, crossed the street and entered the house.

In a case of this kind it was necessary to "fight fire with fire," as the old saying is, so the veteran detective, being provided with an assortment of skeleton keys found no difficulty in entering the other apartment.

The door which led from the front room into the rear opened into the front apartment, and was guarded by a stout bolt.

The lock was a ponderous old-fashioned one, and the man-hunter had no trouble in fitting one of his keys to it.

Then, being provided with a screw-driver, he removed the screws which held the catch of the bolt; with his knife he enlarged the holes into which the screws went, so that when they were replaced, although the catch looked to be perfectly solid and secure, yet in reality a small amount of force would displace the bolt.

After fixing the bolt to his satisfaction, the detective bored a couple of small holes in the corner of one of the lower panels of the door, taking care to do the work in such a way that the holes looked as though they had been made by nails carelessly driven in the door.

After completing the task the man-hunter departed.

"Now, then, if I don't succeed in snaring my game I shall be very much disappointed," he muttered as he descended the stairs.

At seven that night he met the dog trainer according to appointment.

The disguised detective had a couple of blankets and two camp-chairs, neatly wrapped up in paper, under his arm.

"My sister's husband is coming to see her to night," Delmay announced.

"Well, I have made my preparations so as to be able to see what takes place," Joe Phenix observed.

"He will not arrive until eight o'clock, and has requested her to get supper for him; he said he would be out of town on business all day, and would be pretty well tired out when he returned."

"It may be possible that he meditates making a *coup* to-night," Joe Phenix observed.

"Perhaps so."

"You see, all the circumstances appear to be particularly favorable for his purpose," the detective explained.

"He thinks that he is alone in the house with the woman whom he designs to make a victim."

"From what I have seen of the man I have come to the conclusion that he is not one of the kind who would be apt to attempt open violence."

"His game will be to get rid of her in a quiet manner, possibly by the use of poison."

"But, then, the man surely must know that if my sister died suddenly, and in a mysterious manner, I would certainly cause an examination to be made," the brother remarked.

"And I can assure you that I would not spare either time or expense to get at the truth of the matter either," the showman continued.

"You can depend upon it that this fellow is too shrewd not to have taken this fact into consideration," the veteran detective remarked.

"We must not make the mistake of underrating the man, for we could not make a greater blunder," he added.

"The fellow does seem to be smart enough," Delmay admitted.

"You may rest assured that he has not forgotten that you, the brother of his wife, are in the city, or failed to calculate that if his wife should come to a sudden end you would be sure to insist upon an examination."

"Yes, I do not doubt that it is the truth," the young man remarked, after meditating over the matter for a few moments.

"Now, then, how would the man be likely to act under the circumstances?" Joe Phenix remarked in an argumental way.

"The vital points must be considered," he continued.

"First, it is necessary for the success of his plans that your sister should be put out of the way."

"Second, the deed must be performed in such a way that suspicion will not be directed toward him."

"Third, and most important, the matter must be arranged in such a manner that there will not be any row kicked up about the affair so as to bring him prominently before the public, for, if I have not made a mistake about the man's game, that is the chief thing which he wishes to avoid."

"I presume you are correct, for it is evident to me that you thoroughly understand the subject, and, of course, I do not," the dog-trainer observed.

"Yes, I ought to do so, for I have had a deal of experience in this line," the veteran man-hunter remarked in his quiet way.

"Now, then, this is my idea," he continued. "The man will use poison to accomplish his purpose."

"It will not be a difficult matter for the man to administer a drug to her in her drink,

for, as she has the utmost confidence in him, she will never suspect that he intends to harm her.

"Then, after the poison takes effect, as the house is unoccupied, what will be easier than for him to set fire to the building? The flames will destroy all traces of the crime."

"Yes, the affair could be arranged in that way, but what a villain this man must be to even conceive of such a crime!" the dog-trainer exclaimed.

"I don't think there is a doubt but what he is one of those great rascals who astonish the world by their crimes every now and then," the thief-taker replied.

"But come! we will get to our posts and there await the development of events."

The two entered the old house and stole up-stairs with noiseless steps.

The detective was provided with a dark-lantern, and by its light the pair were able to make their way through the dark passages without any trouble.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A VILLAINOUS DEED.

JOE PHENIX had arranged two pair of peep-holes, and after the two were seated on their camp-chairs by the door, they commanded a full view of the front apartment.

And as the other apartment was brilliantly lighted, while the one which they occupied was plunged in total darkness, there was very little danger that the spies would be discovered.

The young wife had the table prepared for supper, and a savory-smelling stew was simmering upon the stove by the side of a steaming teapot.

The woman herself sat by the table, reading, and altogether the scene presented a perfect picture of domestic contentment.

"It is a very Eden," Joe Phenix whispered in the ear of the other.

"Yes, and we are awaiting the appearance of the serpent."

"It is fortunate that we are on hand to bruise his head so as to prevent him from doing any damage," the veteran detective remarked, in his dry way.

The spies had not been in their position over ten minutes when the husband made his appearance.

The wife sprung to her feet and greeted him in the most cordial manner, and he on his part was equally affectionate.

"I am very hungry, and all tired out!" he declared.

"That is too bad," she replied.

"But I have prepared a nice supper for you, and after you have had a plate of the stew, and a good cup of tea, you will feel better."

"Oh, yes, no doubt about it, and you are a dear little woman to prepare so nice a supper for me!" the husband exclaimed.

A smile of delight came over the countenance of the young wife as she listened to the words of praise.

"I am glad that you are pleased," she answered.

"Oh, yes, you are just about the best little woman in all the world!" the husband declared, giving the girl an affectionate hug.

"Could any one bring themselves to believe that this man had murder in his heart, if they had no knowledge of the true state of affairs?" the dog-trainer whispered in the ear of the detective.

"No, it would hardly be possible," Joe Phenix replied.

"Yet it must be remembered that all men of this class who plan elaborate crimes must be most excellent actors or else they would never be able to deceive their victims," the detective continued.

"Yes, that is true, of course," the young showman observed.

"Now, little wife, suppose you fill out the tea right away," the husband remarked.

"I will attend to putting in the milk and sugar while you dish the stew."

"All right! I will do it," the woman replied.

"Now then, here is an opportunity for the man to use his drug, if he has an idea of working a trick of that kind," Joe Phenix whispered in the ear of his companion.

"Yes, that is true," the dog-trainer replied.

"We must keep a close watch upon him,

so as to be able to detect if he tries any game of the kind, and then be ready to interfere before she can drink the poison."

"If the infernal villain tries any trick of the sort it will be hard work for me to keep from strangling him on the spot!" the brother exclaimed.

"You must restrain your anger," the detective warned.

"We must not use any more violence than is absolutely necessary to insure his capture," the man-hunter continued.

"Let the law do the punishing."

"But will the law administer as great a punishment as his crimes deserve?" the dog-trainer asked, in a tone which plainly indicated that there was considerable doubt in his mind in regard to the matter.

"Oh, yes, have no fears in regard to that!" the veteran detective replied.

"Unless I have made a great mistake this man is 'wanted' for a crime fully as great as that which he is now about to commit, so have no uneasiness in regard to the law meeting out full and exact justice to him."

"Of course, you understand all about the matter and I do not," the brother replied.

"But as I have full confidence that you know what you are talking about I will restrain my desire to take vengeance into my own hands and leave him to settle the matter with the ministers of justice."

"Do not fear but that he will receive all the punishment which his crimes deserve," Joe Phenix remarked.

During this conversation, which was carried on in cautious whispers, the two had not relaxed in their vigilance, but kept a close watch on the inmates of the front apartment.

The young wife poured out two cups of tea, then she busied herself in dishing the stew.

In order to perform this operation she had to turn her back to the table.

This was the opportunity for which the husband had schemed.

As soon as the woman turned her back to him, he drew a small vial from his pocket and emptied the contents into one of the cups of tea, quickly returning the vial to his pocket again.

This act was performed so speedily that if the pair had not been on the watch for just such a movement, feeling satisfied that he would try some game of the kind, the chances are great that the "doctoring" of the tea might have escaped their observation.

"Did you see what he did?" the brother asked in a voice which trembled with indignation.

"Yes, the fellow has dosed the tea," the detective replied.

"We must interfere before she has a chance to drink it, for there is no doubt that it is poison and the scoundrel designs to kill her," the brother remarked.

"Undoubtedly! It was my idea, if you remember, that she was in his way, and he would not hesitate to take considerable trouble to remove her from his path," Joe Phenix replied.

"But thanks to your wisdom and skill this villain will not succeed in accomplishing his purpose."

"It is contrary to the law of the universe for deep, designing scoundrels of this sort to succeed in their dark and devious schemes," the veteran man-hunter replied.

"As the old saying goes, the very stars in their courses fight against them, and in the end, take ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the man who breaks the laws is brought before the bar of justice there to be punished for his crimes."

While this conversation had been going on, the young wife finished dishing the stew and placed the vessel on the table.

The husband had seated himself, having put one of the cups of tea by his plate, and the other upon the opposite side of the table where the woman was to sit.

The man took a good drink of the tea, and smacked his lips with an appearance of great satisfaction.

"Really, my dear woman, I think this is about as good a cup of tea as I ever drank!" he exclaimed.

"Just take a good drink of it and see how excellent it is."

"I am glad you like it," the young wife remarked, coloring with pleasure at her hus-

band's praise, which was extremely welcome to her.

"I always do my best to have everything as nice as I can," she continued.

"Well, you have certainly succeeded to perfection as far as the tea goes," the man replied.

"But try it for yourself."

"Yes, I will, dear."

She reached out her hand toward the cup, but before she could touch it Joe Phenix put his shoulder to the door and as it yielded to his weight rushed unceremoniously into the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ACCUSATION.

THE surprise was a startling one.

Both the man and woman sprung to their feet, amazed beyond measure by the abrupt entrance of the two.

Joe Phenix's first move was to take possession of the cup of tea into which Cummings had poured the contents of the vial.

But no sooner had he grasped it than the husband, apparently comprehending what the detective was after, executed a movement so sudden and unexpected that even the veteran man-hunter was taken completely by surprise.

Cummings, with a quickness and agility which would have done credit to a professional acrobat, gave a sudden spring, and leaped headlong over the table and butted Joe Phenix full in the chest.

The thief-taker was not prepared for an attack in this peculiar manner, and the violence of the shock sent him over backward to the floor.

Cummings, in his passage over the table, hurled the lamp to the floor, where it was broken in a dozen pieces.

The light was immediately extinguished, so the room was at once plunged in utter darkness.

Cummings had fallen on top of the detective, and Joe Phenix essayed to hold him.

The cup of tea, which the man-hunter had wished to preserve, so as to be able to prove that the husband had poisoned it, was forced from the hand of the detective by the violence of the fall.

The evidence was destroyed, but for all that Joe Phenix did his best to make the man a prisoner.

The detective was a most excellent wrestler, being an adept indeed in all muscular sports, but though he did his best to hold on to his man, yet Cummings managed in some way to wriggle out of his grasp.

Joe Phenix gave immediate pursuit, but as he rose to his feet he encountered the dog-trainer, who was hastening to his aid.

The two grappled, but though they discovered their mistake almost immediately, yet the blunder gave the fugitive an opportunity to escape.

Seemingly he had the catlike power of seeing in the darkness, for he made his way to the door without any difficulty and rushed out.

The door creaked as it swung on its hinges, so that the pair were warned of the escape of the fugitive, and they gave pursuit at once.

Cummings had succeeded in getting a good start, though, and just as the two rushed into the entry they heard the bang of a door.

"He has managed to get out, but we may be able to nab him in the street!" Joe Phenix exclaimed, as the two hurried down the stairs.

The pair were not half a minute behind the fugitive, but when they reached the street no sign could they see of the man they sought!

"He must have taken refuge in some doorway!" Joe Phenix declared.

"Yes, for he has not had time to reach either of the corners so as to get into another street," the brother observed.

"You go up and I will go down!" the veteran detective exclaimed, hurriedly.

"Are you armed?" he asked.

"Yes, I have a revolver."

"That will do! Get it out so as to have it ready for use, for this fellow is a desperate rascal, and there is no doubt that he will offer a stout resistance if we succeed in overhauling him."

"I will be on my guard, rest assured!" the showman replied.

Then they separated.

One went up the street and the other down, both with revolvers in their hands, ready for immediate battle.

But no trace could they find of the fugitive, although they examined every nook and corner where he could have taken refuge.

The truth in regard to the man's escape flashed upon the veteran detective as soon as he reached the corner.

"I have blundered," he muttered.

"The fellow played an exceedingly sharp trick, and succeeded in duping even a man of my experience," he continued.

"He never came through the front door at all, but went out the back way and made his escape by scaling the fences of the neighboring yards.

"It was a sharp trick, and there isn't much chance of our catching the fellow now, for we have wasted too much time to be able to get on his track."

Having come to this conclusion Joe Phenix retraced his steps, and met the dog-trainer in front of the house wherein this exciting event had taken place.

"I can't discover any signs of him," the brother declared.

The detective then explained his ideas about the matter.

"Ah, yes, no doubt but what you are correct," Delmay assented.

"We will examine the rear entrance, but he has obtained such a start that the chances are a hundred to one that we will not be able to get on his track," Joe Phenix remarked.

The two proceeded to make the examination.

They found that the entry ran directly through the house.

There was a back door, not fastened, which led into a medium-sized yard.

The fence was only about six feet high, so it was apparent at a glance that it would not be a difficult matter for a man possessed of any agility to scale it.

The fugitive by his desperate, headlong dive over the table had proved that he was almost as nimble as a professional acrobat.

"This is the way the man escaped," Joe Phenix observed.

"Yes, no doubt about it, and the man most certainly played an extremely sharp trick upon us."

"He has beaten us this time, but a man must not expect to win every time," the veteran detective observed with the air of a philosopher.

"Do you think there is any chance of your capturing him?"

"Yes; it is my impression that in the long run I will succeed in putting the bracelets on the rascal," the man-hunter replied.

"Still he may be smart enough to get out of the town," Joe Phenix continued.

"And if he takes refuge in flight I may not be able to get on his track."

"Do you think he will try a game of that sort?"

"It is just what the man ought to do," the detective answered.

"Still, men don't always adopt the best course in this uncertain world, and it may be possible that he thinks he is cunning enough to be able to trick me.

"If he comes to that conclusion, and remains in Cincinnati, the chances are great in my opinion that I will be able to put the collar on him."

"Well, I sincerely hope that you will be lucky enough to do so!" the brother exclaimed.

"You were singularly correct in your estimate of the man, and I do hope that you will succeed in bringing him within the reach of justice."

"It is just as I said," the veteran man-hunter replied.

"If the man makes the mistake of thinking he can brave the avenging sword of justice because he has succeeded in avoiding the trap which I laid for him to-night, and remains in the city, the odds are great that I will be able to get him.

"But if he is wise enough to take warning by his narrow escape to-night, and seeks refuge in flight, then it will be a difficult matter for me to nail him."

"But what course do you think he will pursue?"

Joe Phenix reflected over the matter for a moment and then remarked:

"It is my impression that he will remain. His escape to-night instead of being a warning will make him foolhardy; he will fall into the error of thinking he can repeat the trick and then he will fall into my hands."

CHAPTER XXXV.

GOOD ADVICE.

THE detective spoke in a confident tone, yet there was no trace of the boaster in his manner.

It was the utterance of a man who knew his prowess, and was satisfied that he could accomplish the task which he had set out to do.

"This will be a terrible blow to my unfortunate sister," the dog-trainer remarked as the two proceeded up the stairs.

"Yes, it will undoubtedly come very hard on her," the veteran man-hunter assented.

"And it is possible too that we will not be able to make her believe that her husband is a villain," he continued.

"Oh, I don't think she would doubt the truth of our story," the brother observed.

"And then the two desperate attacks which he made on you, and his headlong flight, ought to satisfy her that he is not an honest man, for any one who is not afraid of the law would not be apt to act in such a way.

"That is true, but sometimes it is a difficult matter to induce a woman to listen to reason in a matter where her heart is interested."

"Yes, I suppose there isn't any doubt about that, for it is a well-known fact that some women will cling to the most worthless of men, and the greater the rascal the more the woman seems to care for him."

When the pair arrived at the door of the room, where the struggle had taken place, not a sound could they hear to denote that any one was within.

"What can have become of her?" the brother asked, anxiously.

"She has probably fainted, the excitement being too much for her," the detective suggested.

Then he got his bull's-eye lantern, which he had left in the adjoining room.

It was as the veteran man-hunter supposed.

The girl, being a nervous, fragile creature, had fallen into a faint from which she was recovering when the two entered the apartment.

There was another lamp on the mantel; this the dog-trainer speedily lit and again the room was illuminated.

The girl looked around her with apprehension as the brother assisted her to rise, and then placed her in a chair.

Briefly, Delmay explained how it was that he and his companion happened to make their abrupt entrance into the room.

The young wife listened with the utmost amazement.

"Oh, no, it cannot be possible!" she exclaimed. "There must be some mistake about the matter. Why should the husband whom I love, and who loves me, wish to do me harm?"

"No, Marguerite, there is no mistake," the brother remarked, slowly and sadly.

"I wish to Heaven, for your sake, that there was," he added.

"But, are you sure?" the girl persisted, in an obstinate way.

"Yes, as sure as any one can be of anything in this world!" the brother replied.

"This gentleman, Mr. Phenix, is a detective, and I employed him to find out all the facts which could be ascertained in regard to your husband, for I had an impression that all was not right."

"And what did you discover, sir?" the girl exclaimed, in a trembling voice.

"Enough to convince me that the man was an impostor, sailing under false colors," Joe Phenix replied.

"I made a diligent search and could not find any traces of this rich uncle, Robert Elliott, from whom he professes to have such great expectations."

"The uncle does not exist; the tale was

gotten up by him for the express purpose of deceiving you," the dog-trainer remarked.

"The name by which you know him, Cummings, is a false one," the detective observed.

"The man has an office in this city, and pursues a regular occupation, but goes by another name, and I am satisfied that he is an out and out villain."

"It pains me to be obliged to make this disagreeable disclosure, but in a case of this kind the truth must be spoken, no matter how disagreeable or painful it may be," the detective continued.

"Yes, it would be an act of folly, almost as bad as a crime, to attempt to conceal the truth in a case of this kind," the brother asserted.

"Oh, it is too dreadful!" the afflicted wife declared.

"There is a motive, of course, for the man's attempt upon your life," the detective remarked.

"The fellow became impressed by you, and being satisfied that you were too good a girl to be won in a dishonorable way, made you his wife."

"He took the precaution, though, to marry you under a false name, and hid his identity behind a screen of lies."

"And it is my impression, too, that he never intended to openly acknowledge you as his wife to the world."

"He intended to wrong you from the beginning."

"Oh, can it be possible?" the girl moaned in anguish.

"I do not think there is a doubt about the matter," the man-hunter replied, gently, but with firmness.

"Now circumstances have arisen so that the man is desirous of being free again," the detective explained.

"He thinks there is a chance for him to marry a woman who is worth a great deal of money, and, of course, as long as you are alive it is not possible for him to contract another marriage without committing bigamy."

"This is a horrible story, and it does not seem to me to be possible that it can be true," the girl remarked, slowly.

"From the way in which he acted when we made our appearance, I should think you would be satisfied that he is not an honest man," the brother remarked.

"An innocent man does not fear the intrusion of strangers," he continued.

"He would be apt to resent such a thing, of course, but he would not immediately commence an attack, as this man did."

"Just carefully consider the circumstances, Marguerite," the brother urged.

"Why should the man act in such a strange way if he was all right?"

"If your cup of tea was not drugged, why was he so eager to knock it out of the hand of this gentleman?"

"I do not know, and I do not understand it at all!" the suffering woman declared in a helpless way.

"The moment we made our appearance he realized that we had played the spy upon him, and understood that if he did not contrive to destroy the evidence which this gentleman had secured it would be apt to go hard with him," the dog-trainer remarked.

"That was the reason why he made the desperate attack, and as soon as the cup was destroyed he made his escape as quickly as possible," the brother added.

"I do not know what to think about the matter, for I am utterly bewildered!" the unhappy young wife exclaimed.

"If you will be guided by my advice, you will accept your brother's protection, and retire to some secluded spot where you will be out of the reach of your husband," the veteran detective remarked.

"By means of the daily papers you can easily keep informed in regard to all that goes on in the world," Joe Phenix continued.

"And, unless I have made considerable of a mistake in my calculations, within a couple of weeks, this man, who now calls himself Cummings, will be the inmate of a prison cell with the charge of murder hanging over his head."

"Is it possible?" the wife exclaimed.

"Such is my opinion," the man-hunter re-

plied. "And whether I am correct or not will soon be shown, I am confident."

"This gentleman is giving you good advice, Marguerite, and I think you ought to do as he says," the brother urged.

"Very well, I will," the girl replied.

"Take me with you, Alexander, whenever and wherever you please!" she exclaimed.

Just then the keen eyes of the experienced sleuth-hound caught sight of a minute object on the floor.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CLUE

"WHAT is this—a diamond?" Joe Phenix remarked as he stooped and picked up the tiny stone.

"It looks like one," the dog-trainer remarked, as he surveyed the stone sparkling in the palm of the detective.

"It is only a fragment," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Yes, it looks as if it might have come from one of those peculiar diamond rings composed of minute diamonds massed together," Delmay observed.

Apparently only simple curiosity actuated the veteran detective, yet the moment his eyes fell upon the tiny stone he comprehended that the chances were great that he had secured an important clue.

It was just such another stone as he, and the chief of police, had discovered in the room of the dead millionaire, Carmanage, when they were endeavoring to find some clue to the murderer who had committed the crime.

"Did your husband have a diamond ring of any kind?" the sleuth-hound asked in a careless way of the young wife.

"No, but I once saw in his possession a lady's hairpin, which had a curiously-carved golden head, ornamented with little stones, something like the one which you have," she replied.

"That was rather an odd thing for a gentleman to carry around with him," the veteran detective observed.

"He had it stuck in the inside of his coat, and when I happened to notice it, and remarked what a strange ornament it was, he explained that he found it in the street, and intended to return it to the owner, for he had seen an advertisement stating that just such a pin had been lost," the girl explained.

"Ah, yes, I see," Joe Phenix observed.

"I had a natural curiosity to examine the pin, but my husband said he would prefer that I should not, for the head of it seemed to be loose and he was afraid that if it was handled it would come off."

"Of course, as he was going to carry the pin back to the owner, he was anxious that it should not be damaged," the man-hunter remarked.

"Yes, that was what he was afraid of," the wife assented.

"It is strange what peculiar ornaments ladies like to wear in their hair," the detective remarked, in a reflective way.

"I suppose this hair ornament was one of the kind which seem to be so fashionable now—the sort with a long pin, almost big enough to be called a dagger."

"Yes, the pin was a large one—that is, it was large around—larger than usual, but I suppose it was the usual length," Marguerite replied.

"I could not tell anything about the length, you know, for it was stuck in his coat, so I could only see the upper part."

"Yes, I comprehend, and this little stone—I think it is a genuine diamond, although I am not much of a judge of that sort of thing—undoubtedly came from this hair ornament."

"I think so, sir, for there were quite a number of little stones in the head of the pin," the wife assented.

"I noticed that they were very bright, and sparkled brilliantly but I hadn't any idea that they were diamonds, although my husband said that he thought the pin was a valuable one, and that was the reason why he was anxious to return it in a good condition to the owner," she continued.

"Yes, that was natural, under the circumstances," the detective observed.

"Have you any objection to my keeping this stone for a day or two?" he continued.

"I should like to show it to a friend of mine, and get his opinion in regard to it."

"Oh, no, I do not care for it at all!" the girl replied, quickly.

"It does not belong to me, you know."

"Well, in the absence of the real owner, you are certainly entitled to retain possession of it," the detective replied.

"And I fancy, too, that unless your husband has returned the hairpin to the owner before this little affair of to-night took place, that he will not be apt to trouble himself much about the matter," the detective remarked in a significant way.

"It appears to me that you have not made any mistake," the dog-trainer observed.

"I think the odds are great that the man will be apt to keep out of the way until he thinks this affair has blown over," the brother added.

"It is likely, but in my opinion it would be wise for you to find some quiet retreat in which you can place your sister for a while, so that it will not be possible for this man to discover where she is; then he will not be able to make any further attack on her," the detective remarked.

"I will do so," Delmay responded.

"But if you should discover that there has been any mistake—if you should find out that my husband is not a villain, you will not prevent me from going back to him?" the young wife asked, pleadingly.

"Certainly not," the dog-trainer responded, immediately.

"Be under no apprehensions in regard to that," he continued.

"There isn't any one in this wide world who has your happiness more at heart than I, and I assure you, Marguerite, if I should discover that this man is not a rascal, but worthy to be the husband of a good woman, I should be delighted to restore you to him."

"Oh, yes, Alexander, I know that you would do what is right!" the girl exclaimed.

"I will take you to my hotel to-night, and in the morning I will find some nice, quiet place a little ways out of town, where we will be comfortable."

"It is my intention to lay off for a couple of weeks anyway, so I will not have any work to bother me," the young man continued.

"And you will not fail to tell us if you hear anything of my husband, no matter whether the news is good or bad?" the girl said, imploringly, to the detective.

"You may rest assured that I will not fail to keep you informed if anything of interest transpires," Joe Phenix replied.

This ended the conversation and all departed.

In the street they separated, the brother and sister going off together, while the detective proceeded to the house of the chief of police.

As it happened, the official was at home, and he listened with the utmost attention to the tale told by the man-hunter.

Great too was the satisfaction which he displayed as he gazed on the tiny diamond.

"You are on the right track; there is not a doubt of it; and I think the odds are a hundred to one that you will nail your man!" the chief declared.

"I am going to put the screws on Slim Jerry to-morrow," Joe Phenix announced.

"It is my impression that he had something to do with the Carmanage mystery, and I mean to force the truth out of him."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DETECTIVE AND THE CRACKSMAN.

ALTHOUGH the two crooks had firmly resolved that, after getting safely away with the rich booty secured by them in the Carmanage mansion, they would turn over a new leaf and not throw away their money in a vain attempt to win more at the gaming-table, yet, after a week had elapsed, Slim Jerry was unable to resist the inclination to try a flyer at the faro-table; and, unwilling to admit to the Rat, that he could not withstand temptation, he stole away without letting Powland know where he was going.

Gambling was the besetting sin of Slim Jerry, as drunkenness was of his companion.

Dalston let fall some mysterious hints of a "crib" that was to be cracked, and indicated that he was "piping" the place

off so as to be able to do the trick without trouble when a favorable opportunity came.

The Rat did not take the trouble to question his companion about the matter, for he was as anxious to be rid of his pal as the latter was to go.

Left to his own devices, he could drink all he wanted without reproof by his pal for his weakness.

So, while one man drank to his heart's content, the other enriched the faro-dealers of the "Paris of America" by endeavoring to show them how they could be beaten at their own game.

The two crooks, being diligent newspaper readers, had not failed to peruse the account of the mishaps which had occurred to the veteran crook catcher, Joe Phenix, and chuckled in great glee at the idea of the redoubtable detective being laid up in the hospital for repairs.

It was a source of hilarious satisfaction to the pair to have been able to deal an ugly blow to their mortal enemy—for so they considered the man-hunter—without exposing themselves to any danger.

The ruse of the thief taker had completely deceived the rogues, and neither suspected that the untiring "Hound of Justice" was simply "playing possum."

Slim Jerry had held an all night "session" at the table, and when the dawn lit the eastern skies he was a good thousand dollars poorer than when he had entered the gaming-house.

A half-dozen players had kept the cracksmen company in the attempt to "break the bank," and all were pretty well cleaned out when the morning came.

About the only man at the table who had succeeded in holding his own was a red-faced, middle aged gentleman, who looked as though he came from the country.

This man had played a careful, scientific game, quite a contrast to the reckless plunges of the others, who grew more and more desperate as fortune failed to smile on them.

It was about four in the morning when the players gave up the game, the majority of them because they had lost all and could not go on, and the few who were fortunate enough to have some cash remaining, on account of being tired out.

The players had the usual parting drink with the proprietor and then departed.

Slim Jerry and the country gentleman walked down the street together.

"Hang me if this bad run of luck wasn't just about the worst I ever had!" the cracksmen declared.

Dalston had drunk considerable and was inclined to be talkative.

"Mighty bad, I reckon!" his companion responded.

"Did you notice that during the last hour or so I didn't win one bet out of ten?"

"Luck did run mighty hard ag'in' you, for sart'in," the other acceded, speaking with the peculiar phrase common to the men of the Southwest.

"If I didn't know that the house always runs a square game, I should think I had gone up against the worst kind of a 'brace!'"

"Oh, I reckon it was all squar' enuff!"

"The house has the reputation of going on the square, so I suppose everything was all right, but I never saw such an infernal run of bad luck in all my life."

"Things will run that way, sometimes," the other concluded with the air of a philosopher.

"Yes, I know that, but it makes a man mad when he has to stack up against such a game."

"Sart'in, you bet!"

"And I have been playing in mighty good luck lately, too."

"So I have heard," the countryman responded, speaking with such an entire change of voice that the cracksmen stared at him in astonishment.

"Eh? What do you know about me, or what luck I have been having?" Slim Jerry demanded to know.

"Oh, I am posted!" the other responded.

There was not a trace of the Southwest in the man's voice or words now.

"What is the meaning of this?" the cracksmen questioned, glaring at his com-

panion suspiciously. "What do you know about me?"

"Oh, I am no stranger to you, Slim Jerry, although I have succeeded in fooling you in this particular get-up."

The rascal stared at the other for a moment in dumb amazement, and then shook his head.

"It is a pretty good disguise this time, eh, Jerry?" the stranger inquired banteringly.

"I did not succeed in pulling the wool over your eyes when I masqueraded as the crook, but I did the trick this time, my cove!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A CONFESSION.

This speech of the supposed stranger was a revelation to the crook.

But the disguise which the man-hunter had assumed was so perfect that, even now, when he had as good as admitted that he was Joe Phenix, the cracksman was not able to trace any likeness in the face of this florid countryman to the veteran hunter of "wanted" men.

But it was not the old cracksman's game to admit that he had any knowledge in regard to the detective playing the role of a crook.

"Well, stranger, I think you are a little too much for me," Slim Jerry returned, with a quick shake of the head.

"Don't know what I mean, eh?" the disguised man sleuth asked.

"No, sir, I don't!"

"Ah, Jerry, boy, this game will not work!"

"I am not trying any game!" the crook responded, sullenly.

"Oh, yes, Jerry, you are! You know who I am well enough now!" the detective persisted.

"Now there is one peculiar thing about me," Joe Phenix continued: "I am always willing to admit when I am beaten. If I am trying to play it on a man, and he is smart enough to get the best of me, I am not the man to complain, or harbor resentment."

"You and your pal, the Rat, did get the best of the first round. You were sharp enough to detect who I was, and it was only natural you should attempt to put up a job on me so as to insure your own safety."

"That stranger, too, was a rather sharp fellow, and when you 'blew the gift' on me, and let him know that I was a bloodhound in disguise, he did not lose any time in attempting to put me where I could not do any damage to him or any one else."

"He was not quite smart enough, though, to do the task, although he made a good try for it, and I determined to see if I couldn't turn the affair to my advantage."

"If you and your pal, and this stranger, imagined that I was flat on my back, helpless, in a hospital, some of you would be apt to make a false move, and then I would have a chance to nail you. See?"

"I hav'n't done anything so that I need to be afraid!" the cracksman averred, in a sullen mood.

"How about this Carmanage job?" inquired the detective, sharply.

"I didn't have anything to do with it!" the crook asserted, decisively.

"Oh, you didn't, eh? Now, Jerry, I am going to talk plainly. I don't believe that either you or the Rat had anything to do with the killing of Mr. Carmanage."

Although a past master in the art of dissimulation, the crook could not hide his satisfaction at this admission of the detective.

"That is the truth!" he assented with emphasis. "You know me of old, Phenix, and you know well enough that it never was my game to hurt anybody."

"If I get nipped while trying to take a trick, I don't kick at taking my turn in the stone jug, but you can bet all you are worth, that I will never do anything to expose me to the danger of a life-sentence in the 'cooler,' or to sitting bound in a chair, so as to allow some bloke to fire electricity enough to run a car through my corporation."

"Oh, I am satisfied that neither you nor your pal had anything to do with the man's death, but, all the same, you cracked the crib."

"Oh, no! I wish I may die if I had anything to do with it."

"Of course, I don't know what the Rat may have been up to," the cracksman added after a moment's pause.

"I am not green enough to expect you to speak unless I force you to do so," the detective remarked.

An ugly look appeared on the face of the cracksman.

"You are only wasting your time," he declared in a dogged way.

"I do not agree with you," Joe Phenix replied in his terse, decided way.

"And now, in the first place, I want you to understand what I am after."

"I desire to nail the man who killed Carmanage."

"I don't believe that either you or your pal did the job, but you cracked the crib and lifted the swag, which you 'melted' at a certain English Jew's place in this town, and it is my idea that you can put me on the right track of the man who committed the murder."

"I don't know anything about it!" the crook declared, shortly.

"By the way, your wife is in Cincinnati," Joe Phenix observed, abruptly.

"Which one?" Slim Jerry asked with a grin.

"The one who will be certain to put a knife into you, or bring your career to an end with a pistol bullet if she discovers that you are in the city."

"I am speaking of Belle Hacker, the woman whom you married when you were calling yourself Bill Hacker."

"I met her the other day and she went for me like a wildcat, so I had to explain matters and tell her what a rascal you were in regard to her. Now, you ought to know the woman well enough to understand that if I were to reveal to her that you were in Cincinnati, she would never rest until she had avenged herself upon you."

"Why, man, I wouldn't give a dollar for your life if that woman knew that you were in the town!"

The underjaw of the cracksman dropped and he looked troubled.

"Say! is this a dead straight steer that you are giving me?" he asked.

"It is the Gospel truth, and I will take my oath on it!"

The man was evidently wavering.

"Come! out with it!" she veteran detective exclaimed.

"Tell me all you know about the affair and then get out of Cincinnati before this woman gets a chance to lay you out!"

"I am after the man who killed Carmanage, you understand, and am not going to bother my head about the swag which you and the Rat collared."

"Well, I think you are acting on the square with me and so I will make a clean breast of it, but I give you my word that what I can tell will not help you much."

"Go ahead and allow me to be the judge in regard to that."

Thus admonished the cracksman told the story of how he and his companion had robbed the Carmanage mansion.

"And you found the old man dead in his chair when you entered the sitting-room?" Joe Phenix asked, his brows contracted in thought, for the statement puzzled him.

He placed perfect faith in the story that the cracksman told, for he knew his man well enough to feel satisfied that he was telling the truth.

"Yes, and the Rat and I thought we had struck a picnic, you understand," Slim Jerry explained.

"We didn't have an idea, you know, that the old buffer had passed in his checks in a wrong way," the crook continued.

"You thought that it was a case of sudden natural death?"

"Yes, that is how we figured it out, and both the Rat and myself were struck all in a heap the next day when we read in the newspapers that the old man had been knifed."

"You were afraid that if it was discovered that you and the Rat robbed the house the murder would surely be charged upon you?" Joe Phenix remarked, thoughtfully.

"It would be a dead sure thing, and we might have a mighty hard time to get out of the scrape, for the fact that we had been mixed up in some crooked deals would be

apt to make almost everybody think that we were guilty," the cracksman argued.

"That is true, but I know better," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Men in your line don't commit murder when there isn't any necessity for the deed."

"That's right!" Slim Jerry exclaimed.

"There never was a truer word said," he continued.

"Once in a while a cracksman who is cornered will be apt to show fight, and in such a case a man might get hurt, but men like the Rat and myself, who know their business, are not going out of their way to murder people and risk the hangman all for nothing."

"I think I know how the job was worked," the veteran detective remarked.

"The man was killed by a secret foe, and vengeance was the motive for the murder."

"The party who did the job was concealed in the neighborhood of the house, waiting for an opportunity to enter the mansion, when you and the Rat arrived on the scene."

"You got the dog out of the way through the open gate, and then, when you entered the house, you did not fasten the door behind you, so it was an easy matter for the party, whoever he was, to get into the house."

"And while you and your pal were busy in getting at the silver, the man stole into the sitting room, found the old gentleman asleep and killed him."

"You have got it all right, I think," Slim Jerry remarked.

And then a sudden thought came to the cracksman.

"By gum! I'll bet a fortune that I know where the man was hiding!" the crook exclaimed.

And then he explained to the detective how the dog had entered the shed and sniffed in a suspicious manner at the pile of rubbish in the corner.

"I thought that the beast smelt a rat, or something of the kind, there, but I should not be surprised if the man who committed the murder was concealed in the corner."

"I do not think there is a doubt about it," Joe Phenix remarked.

"Do you recall anything else bearing on the matter?"

The cracksman shook his head.

"No, I can't give you any more points."

"Well, I am glad to get what I have, and as your account will give me something to work on I will not harbor any grudge against you for trying to set the stranger on me," the veteran detective remarked.

"If you are wise, though, you will not tarry in Cincinnati, for if that wife of yours should happen to run across you, she will be apt to make you regret the occurrence."

"I will be off by the first train!" Slim Jerry declared.

This ended the interview.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BROUGHT TO BOOK.

LAWYER SANGERTON and the self-possessed middle aged lady, who had set up a claim to be the widow of the dead millionaire, sat in the office of the legal gentleman waiting for the appearance of the jovial Kentucky major who had taken upon himself the task of looking out for the interest of the heiress of the dead millionaire, Stephen Carmanage.

"What do you think of the prospect?" the lady asked.

"Well, to all appearances everything seems to be going on all right," the lawyer answered, his brain contracted in thought.

"Yet, somehow, the apprehension has come to me that danger threatens," he continued, slowly.

"From what source?"

"I cannot tell."

"Not from this Kentuckian?"

"No, I hardly think so, and yet at times it seems to me that there is something about him which is not right."

"He is very good-natured and jolly."

"Yes, and he seems disposed to believe that your claim is a just one; that is, he talks in that way; but a question has come up in my mind as to whether we can put implicit reliance upon what he says or not."

"I think we can," the lady remarked in a thoughtful way.

"He does not seem to be the kind of man capable of dissimulation," she continued.

"No, that is apparently correct, if he is not playing a part."

"Have you seen anything in his conduct to indicate that he is attempting to deceive us?" the lady asked, anxiously.

"No, to speak the truth, I cannot say that I have, yet in some peculiar way I have got the impression that danger threatens us, and as he is the man who is conducting the negotiations, my suspicions fall upon him."

"Ah, yes, I see," and the lady nodded her head gravely.

"I understand just how you feel about the matter," she continued.

"But we have planned so carefully, and carried out our scheme in such a successful manner that it does not seem possible to me that any one will be shrewd enough to interfere with us."

"That is all very true, and yet I have an apprehension of danger," the young lawyer responded.

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the entrance into the office of Joe Phenix and the superintendent of police, while two stalwart policemen brought up the rear.

Upon the faces of both the lady and the lawyer there appeared a look of surprise; but no trace of alarm.

Both had too complete control of their emotions to allow their features to express their feelings.

Sangerton rose to his feet.

"What is your business, gentlemen?" he asked, politely.

The chief of police he knew by sight, but was ignorant in regard to Joe Phenix.

I presume the reader has surmised that the jolly Kentucky major was the veteran detective in disguise.

But Joe Phenix had played the character so well, and changed his appearance so completely when he donned the garb of the Kentuckian, that even the shrewd and keen-eyed lawyer did not recognize that he had met the man-hunter before when the veteran appeared in his own proper person.

But from his coming with the chief of police he surmised that he was a detective.

"I come upon an unpleasant errand, sir," the superintendent replied.

"You are Mr. Sangerton and this lady Mrs. Imogene Carpenter?"

"Yes, sir," the lawyer replied.

"You are my prisoners then," the chief said.

"Upon what charge?" Sangerton asked.

"Conspiracy and murder," answered the superintendent.

The policeman advanced to the side of the two.

"The accusation is absurd!" Sangerton declared. "Who makes it?"

"I do," Joe Phenix replied. "I am a detective officer, and think I have succeeded in making a strong case against you."

CHAPTER XL.

REPELLED THE ACCUSATION.

If the young lawyer was the criminal the veteran detective supposed him to be, he certainly was an excellent actor, for the amazement depicted upon his face did not seem to be assumed.

"You are a detective officer?" the young lawyer asked.

"Yes, I am," Joe Phenix replied.

"And you charge me with conspiracy and murder?" Sangerton queried.

"I do."

"There is some dreadful mistake!" the lawyer declared.

"Oh, I think not."

"But there is. The accusation is absurd! Whom have I murdered, and against whom have I conspired?"

"As a rule, men in my line of business are averse to allowing their prisoner to know just what evidence they have succeeded in gathering against them until brought forward during the trial of the case," Joe Phenix observed.

"It is my opinion, though, that in the majority of cases it is best that the accused shall comprehend just exactly how he is situated, so I have no objection to entering into an explanation."

"To begin with the conspiracy charge: I accuse you with having entered into an arrangement with this woman, who calls herself Mrs. Imogene Carpenter, to defraud the estate of Stephen Carmanage by falsely claiming that she is the widow of the dead millionaire."

"The accusation is a ridiculous one!" the lawyer asseverated in contemptuous tones. "It is apparent, too, that you are not well posted in regard to the matter, or else you would understand that I do not represent the lady at all."

"On the contrary, I have acted for the estate—that is, as far as I have had anything at all to do with the matter."

"I am well informed in regard to all that has transpired," the detective rejoined. "In this matter you played a very cunning and skillful part. You pretended to be Miss Blanche Carmanage's friend; she had confidence in you and believed that you would give her good advice, but you took advantage of that fact to aid this woman in her scheme to seize upon a part of the dead millionaire's property by pretending that she had been married to him."

"You did not appear for her in the guise of a lawyer, but as Miss Blanche's friend gave your opinion that the woman's claim was a just one and advised that a compromise should be made with her."

"That is my honest opinion!" Sangerton assented with a great deal of dignity; "but the fact that I gave such advice to Miss Carmanage does not warrant you in charging that I am engaged in a conspiracy with her to defraud the dead millionaire's estate."

"I have other evidence in regard to that which I will produce in due time," Joe Phenix rejoined.

"I fancy that the assertion is what the sporting men would call a bluff on your part," Sangerton suggested with a sneer.

"It will take time to prove whether that is correct or not," was the answer.

"And now in regard to this murder charge," the lawyer remarked with an air of bravado.

"If you have no better evidence to base it upon than mere *supposition*, as in this ridiculous conspiracy charge, I fancy that I am not in a particularly dangerous position."

"Whom am I charged with murdering?"

"Stephen Carmanage," Joe Phenix answered.

"This is so absurd that it is hardly worth while for me to deny it!" Sangerton exclaimed.

"You can suit yourself in regard to that, of course," the detective returned.

"I have often read of the blunders which you sharp-eyed man-hunters make sometimes," the lawyer went on, in a sarcastic way, "but in this case you have beaten the record."

"Do you think so?" the veteran queried.

"I do, indeed."

"You will have cause to change your mind in regard to that matter before this case is ended."

"I doubt it!" with a sneer. "Why, the very idea is so absurd that it is hardly worth while to discuss the matter; but, just for the sake of argument I will go into it."

"Men do not commit crimes without a reason."

"Very true," Joe Phenix assented.

"What reason was there for me to murder Mr. Carmanage? I was on good terms with the old gentleman—there had never been the slightest trouble between us, in any way. In fact, I am certain the millionaire had a good opinion of me, as I certainly had of him, for he had always treated me with the highest consideration."

"Although I am not a detective, yet I understand enough about the man-hunting business to be aware that when you bloodhounds take hold of a case of this kind your first step is to look for the man who has a *motive* to commit the deed."

"That is correct," Joe Phenix agreed.

"And you surely have not succeeded in discovering that I had any reason to wish ill to Mr. Carmanage!" the lawyer asserted.

"As I said, there had never been any trouble between us, therefore there could not be any personal enmity as the motive."

"The house was robbed on the night of the murder according to the accounts pub-

lished in the newspapers, and it is not possible you charge that I am a common vulgar thief—a housebreaker?"

"Oh, no; I am satisfied you did not have anything to do with the robbery," the detective acknowledged.

"I am glad to hear you say that!" with a scornful laugh. "It is a relief to know that I am not going to be charged with all the crimes in the calendar."

"I know you did not get away with the silver, for I have already located the two men who did that job."

The lawyer looked surprised at this statement, but, thinking for a moment, he added:

"As I said, I do not understand much about the detective business, but would think that, if you had succeeded in discovering the men who robbed the house, you would not be at a loss to apprehend the slayer of Mr. Carmanage, for it stands to reason that the men who plundered the house are the ones who committed the murder."

"In this case I am satisfied that it is not so," Joe Phenix promptly rejoined.

"The men who got away with the silver are a pair of cunning crooks, who have managed the affair so cleverly that, though I am satisfied they were the two who robbed the house, yet I am not able to secure proof enough to convict them."

"I know both of the fellows, of old, and know that neither one of them would use violence in a case of this kind, even when their own liberty was threatened. In fact, there was no reason why they should kill Mr. Carmanage, and I am sure they did not do the deed."

"Why do you charge me with the murder—why should I kill the man?" the lawyer demanded.

"Because you owed him a debt of vengeance!" was the ready reply.

"A debt of vengeance!" Sangerton repeated, with an appearance of being greatly astonished, yet the keen-eyed Phenix read the uneasiness in the man's manner, despite his wonderful self-possession.

"Yes; it is the story of the Corsican vendetta over again. The vendetta of the Carmanages and the Rosaires."

"You are speaking in riddles. I do not comprehend what you are talking about!" Sangerton declared in a lofty way.

He had entirely recovered his composure now, but the woman was visibly agitated.

"Of course you are not obliged to criminate yourself," the detective remarked, "and I have no wish to set any traps for you. It is my opinion that I have secured evidence enough to convict you, but that is a point which the trial alone can settle."

"I cannot understand, sir, how you could arrive at such a conclusion; it is a complete mystery to me," the lawyer asseverated with growing uneasiness; "and as to my being named Rosaire, the supposition is absurd!"

"That is your name, and you came to Cincinnati for the express purpose of killing Mr. Carmanage, in carrying out the family vendetta."

"It is a leaf torn from a romance!" the lawyer declared with a sneer; yet now pale in face and agitated in manner. "It is sober reality!" Joe Phenix averred serenely. "You are named Rosaire, the last member of the family which for two generations has been at war with the Carmanages."

"Your purpose has been accomplished; you have killed the last male of the Carmanage line, for Carmanage has left no son to carry on the vendetta."

"Apparently you have secured a complete triumph, but I do not think you counted upon the law to take up the quarrel. It has done so, though, and the death of Stephen Carmanage will be avenged—righteously avenged!"

"You have constructed a most ingenious theory, but, I fancy, when you are called upon in a court-room to prove that it is the truth, you will find it a much more difficult matter than you anticipate," Sangerton assumed with bravado.

"That is something time must decide," Joe Phenix quietly responded.

"I hope that you will not parade us through the streets in fetters," the lawyer urged, glaring at the handcuffs, which one of the policemen held in his hand.

"Oh, no," the chief announced. "There is a coach outside for your accommodation."

"I am much obliged," with a polite bow. The lawyer and the woman were conducted to the carriage, by the policemen, Joe Phenix and the chief remaining behind.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SEARCH.

As soon as the officers departed with their prisoners, the superintendent of police shook his head at the veteran detective.

"The fellow is game!" he declared.

"Yes, and he will fight to the last gasp."

"We have succeeded in forming a pretty strong chain of circumstantial evidence, though, and ought to be able to convict him," the police chief assumed.

"Very true; but I wish we could get hold of the tiny dagger with which the deed was done. If we could find it in possession of this man, or on premises occupied by him, it would be one strong link in the chain."

"No doubt about that," the chief assented, "but a shrewd, sharp fellow like this one ought to have sense enough to destroy a thing of that kind."

"That is correct, but the criminal annals of the world prove that the men and women who are reckless enough to break the law are so unwise, in a great number of cases, as to preserve articles sure to lead to their conviction," Joe Phenix explained.

"Yes, you are right about that," the superintendent admitted. "Since I have been on the force, at least a dozen instances of the kind have come to my immediate knowledge."

"I now propose to make a careful search of this house. If the dagger is not found here, then to search the office of Sangerton," Phenix remarked.

"Which is a good idea."

"I don't build much upon either search, though, for it is my idea that this man has an abode somewhere which he is careful to keep concealed from the knowledge of all who are acquainted with him. He has been leading a double life since coming to this city, and so must have some place where he makes the change from the one character to the other."

"Undoubtedly; and if you could succeed in discovering his secret resort, the chances are good that some important discoveries might be made."

"That is my opinion; but the man has managed his game so cunningly that, so far, I have not got on the track. I have hopes of being able to do so yet, however."

The two then proceeded to search the house, but the result was as the veteran detective anticipated: not a single discovery of any importance was made.

"Let us go at once to Sangerton's office and try our luck," the superintendent now urged.

The two at once set out.

Leaving them to pursue their way, we will follow the coach in which the lawyer and the lady had been put.

Two policemen had charge of the pair; one rode in the inside of the coach with the prisoners, while the other was on the box by the side of the driver.

As Sangerton apparently had no idea of attempting to escape, the policemen had neglected to handcuff him.

This was a mistake, as the officers were fated to discover.

The prisoners were seated, side by side, on the back seat, while the policeman occupied the front one.

All went well until the coach got to Vine street.

When it turned into this noted thoroughfare, from the side street, its progress was stopped by a block in the street.

There had been a runaway; the horse had smashed into a street-car which had been forced from the track and overturned, causing a complete blockade.

The policeman on the box of the coach leaped to the ground for the purpose of regulating matters, for the drivers of the vehicles, after calling each other all the names which they could think of, were about to come to blows.

The officer in the interior of the coach took a lively interest in the scene, neglecting his prisoners for the moment.

This gave the lawyer his opportunity.

While the blue-coat was staring out of the

window, at the crowd, Sangerton softly pushed open the door of the coach, on the opposite side, and both he and the woman were lucky enough to slip out without the policeman being aware of the fact.

A minute later the officer discovered that the birds had flown!

Greatly exasperated because he had been so neatly tricked, the policeman at once bounded out in pursuit.

Vain was his search, though. No one had noticed the man or woman leaving the hack, and, therefore, no one could give any information in regard to them.

The disgusted officers proceeded immediately to Headquarters, and there the machinery of the law was set in motion to effect the recapture of the fugitives.

The details stationed at the railway depots, were warned to be on the lookout for the pair, and those on duty at the bridges and roads leading to the suburbs were particularly cautioned to be on the alert.

A half an hour after the policemen reached Headquarters, the superintendent and Joe Phenix made their appearance.

The rage of the chief was great when he learned what had occurred, and in his exasperation he threatened to "break" the unlucky pair.

The captain in charge, at Headquarters, tried to pacify the "great Mogul" by reciting how prompt he had been to take measures to effect the recapture of the man and woman.

"If the pair attempts to leave the city it is almost certain that they will be captured," the captain declared.

"That is all very well, but the birds may have already flown beyond reach," the police chief growled.

"What do you think, Phenix?" he asked.

"I am inclined to think that both are still in the city, for, as they could not have anticipated arrest they probably were not prepared for flight," was the veteran's conclusion.

"Ah, well, yes, I don't know but what there is a good deal in that," the chief assented.

"It takes money to travel, you know, and if the pair were not well provided with funds the chances are great that they could not get far away," Joe Phenix argued.

"True—very true!" the superintendent admitted.

"Money to the fugitive is like wings to a bird. Without wings the bird cannot fly, and lacking money the fugitive from the wrath of the law does not stand much chance to get beyond reach."

"It will take the man a day or so to get ready, for I assume that he has been sharp enough to have his affairs in such a shape that he can get at his valuables at short notice," Joe Phenix observed.

"Then, too, as the man is an uncommonly sharp scoundrel, I am inclined to think he will not attempt to get away immediately, for he will be shrewd enough to suspect that all avenues from the city will be carefully guarded."

"That is a reasonable supposition," the superintendent acquiesced.

Then Joe Phenix added:

"And now that he knows we are after him, he will be on his mettle, and it will not be an easy matter to trap him. It is our skill, now, against his wit."

"He has been leading a double life, and just by accident I learned the fact. His right name is Rosaire. He called himself Sangerton so as to get a chance at Mr. Carmanage. Then, again, he has been passing as Robert Cummings, pretending to hail from Chicago."

"He assumed this name because he had fallen in love with a young girl and did not want to marry her as Sangerton, as he had made up his mind to secure the heiress, Miss Blanche."

"A dyed-in-the-wool scoundrel!" the police chief declared.

"Exactly! one of those supremely smart rascals who take real delight in playing a desperate game for a great stake."

"In the first place, he wanted to kill Carmanage in order to carry out the family vendetta; that is the old Italian-Corsican idea. But the villain desired to improve upon the old-time notion; the death of his enemy alone would not content him, for, in addition to killing the man, he wished to get possession

of some of his wealth, and an extremely cunning plot he devised.

"First the murder was committed; then the woman—who, I believe, is the mother of this Rosaire—was brought forward as the widow of the dead millionaire, hoping thus to secure her one-third of the estate; then the man himself made love to the heiress, and as he is a plausible, gentlemanly fellow, the chances were good that, in time, he would have captured the girl."

"But this explosion has upset both games," the chief intimated. "And now to work. I will not leave a single stone unturned. In addition to putting all the detectives on the alert, I will order the police to make a house-to-house inspection, giving them instruction to make a particular inquiry in regard to all strangers."

"Here is another point which has occurred to me," the veteran detective now observed. "This man is now rendered desperate by the complete failure of his schemes."

"Will not the idea of the vendetta come up again in his mind?"

"Miss Blanche is a Carmanage—the last one of the family—and until the Carmanages are entirely destroyed the vendetta really will not end."

"That is so; you are correct in regard to the situation. It would be the most natural thing in the world for the cut-throat to strike at the young lady now that there is no possibility for him to get at her fortune," the chief decided, "so we must put a guard on the Carmanage mansion!"

"Just what I was going to suggest; and if you will give me a couple of good men I will take charge of the house, myself."

"Certainly! I will be glad to commit the matter to your hands."

"As I told you, he changed his appearance materially, and under the name of Robert Cummings married a girl known as Marguerite Delmay."

"Then, when he saw a chance to marry this heiress, he formed a plot to murder his wife, as the secret of his double life might be discovered."

"I was fortunate enough to frustrate this dastardly scheme, for I had already discovered that the lawyer Sangerton and Robert Cummings were one and the same person."

"I did not say anything to him to-day about the Cummings matter, as I wished to hold it in reserve."

Then Joe Phenix took his departure.

That night, a little after eight o'clock, the veteran and a couple of the Cincinnati sleuths, carefully disguised, entered the Carmanage mansion.

CHAPTER XLII.

A DESPERATE MAN.

It was a dark night, although there was a young moon, but, as the face of the heavens was covered by heavy clouds, the "queen of night" was almost totally obscured.

One by one the lights in the Carmanage mansion disappeared, as the hours waned and midnight drew near.

At last the bells in the distant city proclaimed that twelve o'clock had come, and all the lights in the house of the dead millionaire were extinguished with the exception of those usually kept burning all night.

Nothing was stirring in the neighborhood—only the big mastiff who was wandering around the garden, as was his wont during the hours of darkness.

Suddenly the dog raised his head and commenced to sniff the air.

A dark figure was stealing along in the gloom, in the neighborhood of the small door in the wall, on the back street.

As soon as the dog became satisfied that somebody was approaching in that direction, he uttered a series of low growls and marched with stately steps in the direction of the door.

The man in the street, who was proceeding so cautiously, tried about the same game that the two crooks had worked.

With a skeleton key he unlocked the door, then opened it and took refuge in the shed across the way.

When the mastiff came to the opening he passed through it, and with threatening growls marched into the shed.

The man, though, who had unlocked the

door, had mounted to the loft and so was well out of the dog's reach: therefore the mastiff, after sniffing around the shed and growling for a while, passed out into the street.

Then, as on the previous occasion when he had obtained his liberty by means of the open door, the mastiff's attention was attracted by the sounds of dogs barking in the distance, and he set off to investigate the matter.

The man in the shed waited for a good ten minutes, so as to allow ample time for the dog to get well out of the way, before he descended to the ground.

Then he stole with noiseless steps to the open door and passed through the entrance into the Carmanage garden, closing the door carefully behind him, thus preventing the big dog from returning if the beast took the notion into his head to do so.

As the reader has doubtless guessed, this midnight intruder was Sangerton, or Rosaire, to call the man by his right name.

He was dressed in a well-worn dark suit and had assumed a false full beard as a disguise; and now, with a soft felt hat pulled well down over his eyes, he bore no resemblance to his former self.

With noiseless steps he made his way to the house.

He had carefully calculated upon his plan of action, for he proceeded without hesitation.

A veranda ran around two sides of the mansion, and it was not a difficult matter for a young and agile man to climb one of the posts of this porch and so gain access to the roof of the structure.

Being well acquainted with the house, Rosaire knew just how to direct his steps.

The windows of Miss Blanche's sleeping apartment looked out upon the veranda roof.

To one of these windows Rosaire at once moved.

He was provided with a diamond glass-cutter and with all the skill of a professional burglar he cut a hole in the glass in the neighborhood of the catch, so that he could unlock the fastening.

Then it was an easy matter for him to raise the window and enter the room, which he did, with the silence of a shadow.

The gas was burning, turned down quite low, still there was light enough to enable any one to distinctly distinguish all objects in the room.

The bed of the girl stood at the further end of the room in an alcove, and by the dim light the intruder could distinguish the form of the girl beneath the clothes.

She was lying upon her side with her back to the window.

Rosaire halted and listened intently for a few moments.

The girl did not stir.

"It is all right," his thoughts took word. "She is sleeping soundly; the raising of the window will not disturb her."

"The end of the vendetta then is at hand. One blow, and the last of the hated race of the Carmanages passes from the earth."

"The line is extinct, and the last of the Rosairens have done the deed of vengeance!"

Then the intruder drew a slender bit of steel from where he had it hidden in the inside of the breast of his coat.

The little piece of steel did not seem to be more than a toy, for it was only about six inches long, of the size of a knitting-needle, with a jeweled head.

A sort of lady's hat-pin, in fact.

"This is the instrument with which the deed will be done!" Rosaire murmured, as he held the bit of steel so that the dim rays of the gaslight could fall upon it.

"This is the steel which let out the life of Stephen Carmanage, and now it will send the soul of the last of the race to the other world."

"This human bloodhound," he then thought, "who hunted me so closely, is a sharp fellow and undoubtedly imagines that he has driven me from the city; but when he reads the particulars of this tragedy in the papers to-morrow, he will be apt to change his mind."

"And now to the deed! A single stroke, and vengeance will be accomplished!"

With noiseless steps Rosaire stole across the floor.

Apparently the fate of Blanche Carmanage was in his hands.

But, this is a world of surprises, and a particularly great one was in store for this midnight assassin.

When he was within a yard of the alcove, Joe Phenix suddenly made his appearance from behind one of the curtains which half-masked the approach to the bed.

A revolver was in his hand, leveled full at the breast of the intruder.

"Drop your weapon and surrender, or you are a dead man!" the veteran bloodhound exclaimed.

Rosaire was so taken by surprise that for a moment he was completely astounded.

And then, before he had a chance to recover—to prepare to resist capture, if any such wild idea was in his head—he was seized from behind by two stalwart men, the slender dagger was wrested from his grasp, and a pair of handcuffs snapped upon his wrists, although he made a desperate resistance.

During the struggle Blanche sprang from the bed, and when Rosaire saw that, instead of being attired in a night robe, she was completely dressed, he comprehended that he had fallen into a trap.

"This is your work, you infernal bloodhound!" Rosaire cried, fiercely, as he rose to his feet after his captors had snapped the "bracelets" upon his wrists.

"Yes, it is mine, and at last I think I have got you so dead that I will not have much difficulty in convicting you of the murder of Mr. Stephen Carmanage."

"It is a lie! I did not kill him!" Rosaire fiercely retorted.

"Let me warn you to be careful in regard to what you say, for your utterances may be used against you on your trial," the detective cautioned.

"Bah! I am not afraid of that! But I did not kill the man, and I defy you to prove that I did!"

"Here is the very weapon with which the deed was done," and Phenix stooped and picked up the tiny steel dagger.

"Take notice that either your rough grasp or the shock when the dagger struck the floor has displaced one of the tiny diamonds."

The gems, after the fashion of those set in a marriage ring, adorned the handle.

"See where it glistens on the carpet!"

All looked, and the minute diamond was visible.

"What of it—what has that to do with my case?" Rosaire demanded.

"A great deal, as you will discover when your trial takes place," Joe Phenix averred.

"I do not comprehend you," the prisoner said, with an air of sullen amazement.

"A tiny diamond, exactly like this one, was found by the chair of Stephen Carmanage when the discovery was made that he had been murdered," the detective explained.

Rosaire shut his lips firmly and a desperate look came into his eyes.

For a moment he surveyed the acute bloodhound, who had so cleverly entrapped him, as the hunted animal, brought to bay and who sees no way of escape open, looks upon the hunters eager to give him his death-wound.

Rosaire was lawyer enough to understand that such a bit of evidence would be almost certain to lead to his conviction.

His heart sunk within him, for he now realized that his case was desperate indeed.

He was game, though, and so put on a bold front.

"This is all an ingenious artifice of yours to fasten the guilt of this crime upon me!" he protested; "but a good lawyer will not have any difficulty in making the truth apparent, and although I am aware that appearances are greatly against me, yet I will be able to explain everything, I think."

"I hope so, for I hate to bring a capital crime home to a man, but I have my doubts about your being able to accomplish the feat," Joe Phenix replied.

An hour later Rosaire was in a prison cell.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A CONFIDING WOMAN.

JOE PHENIX was up early the next morning.

He got his breakfast and then sat down in

the hotel reading-room to peruse the morning news.

Owing to the late hour of the assassin's capture no account of the affair was in the morning papers, and as the detective understood this he did not expect to see any important statement in regard to the murder of the millionaire.

The hotel reading-room was on the first floor, and Phenix sat by one of the windows, so he could be plainly seen from the street. He had not occupied the chair more than ten minutes when the young showman, Alexander Delmay, came along.

A grave look rested on the young man's face, but he brightened up immediately upon beholding the great crook-smiter from New York.

Delmay came at once into the hotel and shook hands warmly with Phenix.

"You are just the man, of all men, I wanted to see!" the dog-trainer declared.

"You have the opportunity now. Take a chair and make yourself comfortable," Phenix invited.

The young man obeyed, and as he sat down he took a look around.

The room was almost deserted, and as none of the occupants were near the corner where Phenix sat, the dog-trainer saw that he could speak freely without danger of being overheard.

"I am having considerable trouble with my sister," Delmay explained.

"I am sorry to hear it."

"Despite all that has occurred she still has a great deal of faith in that scoundrel of a Cummings."

"Well, I am not surprised to hear it, for it is the way of womankind," the veteran remarked, with a thoughtful shake of the head.

"When a woman—a good, true-hearted woman—once fixes her affections on a man, it is usually a hard matter to convince her that he is unworthy her love."

"That is just where the trouble lies, in the present instance," the dog-trainer observed. "My sister is not willing to believe that this man is a thorough-paced scoundrel; she thinks there must be some mistake about the matter. She cannot conceive it possible that the man deliberately plotted to have her murdered so as to marry another woman. She assumes that it is some horrible mistake, and feels sure he will return to her and make a satisfactory explanation."

"Poor, deceived woman! But, luckily for her, certain events have happened which must satisfy her that this man is a villain of the deepest dye."

Delmay looked surprised.

"He is now in jail, accused of being the assassin of the millionaire, Stephen Carmanage."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes; I arrested him last night."

"And there is no doubt about his being the murderer?"

"Not the slightest, in my opinion, and I do not think there can be any trouble in convincing a jury that he is the real criminal."

"When my sister learns this news, she surely must be convinced that she has given her love to a most despicable villain."

"I will go with you and explain to her just how matters stand, if you care to have me do so," Phenix volunteered.

"I will be greatly obliged if you will do so!" the brother assented, immediately.

"You see, the trouble is that she lacks faith in me, although I am her brother," the dog-trainer explained. "She knows that I had a bad opinion of the man in the first place, and so she thinks I am prejudiced against him."

"Yes, I comprehend; and it is quite possible that she will not be willing to believe me, but when she sees the man standing before the bar of justice, a prisoner, charged with a most foul and atrocious murder, and listens to the evidence, if she is possessed of good sound common sense she must then come to the conclusion that she has bestowed her affections upon an utterly vile and conscienceless scoundrel," rising as he spoke.

"We are now staying at the professional boarding-house on Vine street, only a few minutes' walk," the dog-trainer explained as they started on.

In ten minutes they were in the presence

of Marguerite. The girl had changed greatly for the worse, and the impassive detective, who had a soft heart despite his lion like nature, felt extremely sorry for her.

As gently as possible he broke the terrible news to her—told her the whole story.

The girl was astounded.

"Oh, sir, it does not seem as if it could be possible!" Marguerite exclaimed.

"If you attend the examination which will be held at ten o'clock this morning, you will find that I have not told anything but truth," Phenix assured.

At this moment a couple of newsboys came up the street yelling:

"Here's yer extra!"

"An account of the arrest!" the detective suggested.

Delmay hastened to procure the "extra."

It was as the Gotham sleuthhound anticipated.

The newspaper men, understanding that they had a first-class sensation, hastened to get out an extra, giving elaborate particulars of the arrest of Sangerton.

Delmay read the account aloud.

"There! What do you say now?" he asked when he had come to the end.

"It seems too dreadful to believe, but I fear it is the truth," the hapless Marguerite admitted.

"Will you go to the trial and see with your own eyes the man brought before the bar of justice?" the brother asked.

"Yes, I will, although the experience will be a most painful one to me," the girl answered.

The detective gave the dog-trainer instructions in regard to the matter, and took his departure.

In due time the assassin was arraigned before the bar of justice. He had secured a prominent couple of criminal lawyers to defend him, and presented a bold front, despite the overwhelming array of evidence against him.

Phenix had an idea that the mother of the prisoner—the woman who had called herself Imogene Carpenter Carmanage—would attend the examination, in disguise, so he, with three of the keenest of the Cincinnati detectives, was on the watch for her.

The inference of the veteran thief-taker was correct; the woman did come, in disguise—was recognized, captured and placed on trial, charged with being an accessory to the murder.

Rosaire was visibly disturbed by this unexpected occurrence.

He held a whispered consultation with his lawyers after the telling evidence against him had been partly developed, and they immediately begged for an adjournment of the case, pleading that they had not had sufficient time to become acquainted with the particulars.

The judge granted this request, and the two prisoners were conveyed to the jail.

In the prison the lawyers had a long interview with both mother and son—for such they were—and these wily advocates, although acknowledged to be the leaders in their line in the Queen City, frankly confessed that the evidence was so strong they did not see how it would be possible for them to break or qualify it.

"It will be the gallows for me, then, and a long term of imprisonment for her, I suppose?" the prisoner asked, with a gloomy brow.

The lawyers admitted that that expressed the situation exactly, but they attempted to comfort the accused by saying that while there was life there was hope.

Then the men of law departed.

An hour or so after the lawyers were gone Rosaire got permission from the prison officials to hold a brief conversation with his mother.

The jailer appointed to keep watch over the conference was a humane man, and so retired a little in the background to permit mother and son to converse without their words being overheard.

Ten minutes only the interview lasted; but during that time the steel-hearted avengers of blood adopted their own method to baffle the law.

Both were found dead in the morning!

They had taken a subtle poison, which evidently the woman had secreted on her

person, and thus escaped standing before the bar of an earthly tribunal.

The death of these two vengeful and utterly depraved creatures closed the strangest episode in the momentous life of the great metropolitan detective, and to the end he will regard the case as a terrible illustration of the power of hate and vengeful passion to endow a human being with the attributes of a tiger.

THE END.

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- 778 The Butler Detective; or, Old Grip's Grip.
- 770 The Showman Detective.
- 762 Old Grip, the Detective.
- 740 Captain Clow, the Fighting Detective.
- 732 The Hurricane Detective.
- 643 Castlemaine, the Silent Sifter.
- 616 Magnus, the Weird Detective.
- 606 The Drop Detective.
- 595 Wellborn, the Upper Crust Detective.
- 582 Joram, the Detective Expert.
- 574 Old Falcon's Double.
- 561 The Thug King; or, The Falcon Detective's Foe.
- 548 Falconbridge, the Sphinx Detective.
- 536 Old Falcon's Foe; or, The Detective's Swell Job.
- 515 Short-Stop Maje, the Diamond Field Detective.
- 509 Old Falcon, the Thunderbolt Detective.
- 501 Springsteel Steve, the Retired Detective.
- 494 The Detective's Spy.
- 485 Rowlock, the Harbor Detective.
- 477 Dead-arm Brandt.
- 467 Mainwaring, the Salamander.
- 462 The Circus Detective.
- 451 Griplock, the Rocket Detective.
- 444 The Magic Detective; or, The Hidden Hand.
- 424 Hawk Heron's Deputy.
- 386 Hawk Heron, the Falcon Detective.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS.

- 772 Captain Corden the Twister Detective.
- 755 Wild Pete the Broncho-Buster Detective.
- 726 Fearless Sam, the Grand Combination Detective.
- 719 Boston Bob, the Sport Detective.
- 572 Jaunty Joe, the Jockey Detective.
- 554 Mad Sharp, the Rustler.
- 538 Rube Rocket, the Tent Detective.
- 526 Death-Grip, the Tenderfoot Detective.
- 507 The Drummer Detective.
- 432 The Giant Horseman.
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- 724 Captain Hercules, the Strong Arm Detective.
- 711 Dan Damon, the Gilt-Edge Detective.
- 701 Silver Steve, the Branded Sport.
- 694 Gideon Grip, the Secret Shadower.
- 684 Velvet Van, the Mystery Shadower.
- 673 The Dude Desperado.
- 671 Jason Clew, the Silk-Fanded Ferret.
- 664 Monk Morel, the Man-Hun er.
- 654 Sol Sphinx, the Ferret Detective.
- 642 Red Pard and Yellow.
- 608 Silent Sam, the Shadow Sphinx.
- 592 Captain Sid, the Shasta Ferret.
- 579 Old Cormorant, the Bowery Shadow.
- 569 Captain Cobra, the Hooded Mystery.
- 559 Danton, the Shadow Sharp.
- 550 Silk Hand, the Mohave Ferret.
- 543 The Magnate Detective.
- 532 Jack Javert, the Independent Detective.
- 523 Reynard of Red Jack; or, The Lost Detective.
- 512 Captain Velvet's Big Stake.
- 505 Phil Fox, the Genteel Spotter.
- 496 Richard Redfire, the Two Worlds' Detective.
- 487 Sunshine Sam, a Chip of the Old Block.
- 480 Hawkspear, the Man with a Secret.
- 478 Coldgrip in Deadwood.
- 460 Captain Coldgrip, the Detective.
- 453 Captain Coldgrip's Long Trail.
- 447 Volcano, the Frisco Spy.
- 441 The California Sharp.
- 434 Lucifer Lynx, the Wonder Detective.
- 421 Father Ferret, the Frisco Shadow.
- 413 Captain Coldgrip in New York.
- 407 Captain Coldgrip's Nerve; or, Injun Nick.
- 400 Captain Coldgrip; or, The New York Spotter.
- 392 The Lost Bonanza; or, The Boot of Silent Hound.
- 382 The Bonanza Band; or, Dread Don of Cool Clan.
- 374 Major Blister, the Sport of Two Cities.
- 365 Keen Kennard, the Shasta Shadow.
- 352 The Desperate Dozen.
- 347 Denver Duke, the Man with "Sand."
- 340 Cool Conrad, the Dakota Detective.
- 335 Flash Dan, the Nabob; or, Blades of Bowie Bar.
- 321 California Claude, the Lone Bandit.
- 294 Broadcloth Burt, the Denver Dandy.
- 278 Hercules Goldspur, the Man of the Velvet Hand.

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- 730 Duke Despard, the Gambler Duelist.
- 604 The Detective in Rags; or, The Grim Shadower.
- 500 The True-Heart Pards.

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- 746 The Dragoon Detective; or, A Man of Destiny.
- 158 The Doomed Dozen.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID.

- 267 The White Squaw.
- 234 The Hunter's Feast.
- 228 The Maroon. A Tale of Voodoo and Ob'ah.
- 213 The Wild Huntress; or, The Squatter.
- 213 The War Trail; or, The Hunt of the Wild Horse.
- 208 The White Chief. A Romance of Mexico.
- 200 The Rifle Rangers; or, Adventures in Mexico.
- 74 The Captain of the Rifles; or, The Lake Queen.
- 66 The Specter Barque. A Tale of the Pacific.
- 55 The Scalp Hunters. A Romance of the Plains.
- 12 The Death-Shot; or, Tracked to Death.
- 8 The Headless Horseman.

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- 353 Bart Brennan; or, The King of Straight Flush. By John Cuthbert.
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- 312 Kinkfoot Karl, the Mountain Scourge. By Morris Redwing.
- 275 The Smuggler Cutter. By J. D. Conroy.
- 261 Black Sam, the Prairie Thunderbolt. By Col. Jo Yards.
- 190 The Three Guardsmen. By Alexander Dumas.
- 179 Conrad, the Convict. By Prof. Gildersleeve.
- 166 Owlet, the Robber Prince. By S. R. Urban.
- 152 Captain Ironnerve, the Counterfeiter Chief.
- 146 The Doctor Detective. By George Lemuel.
- 144 The Hunchback of Notre Dame. By Victor Hugo.
- 140 The Three Spaniards. By Geo. Walker.
- 133 Rody the Rover. By William Carleton.
- 125 The Blacksmith Outlaw. By H. Ainsworth.
- 110 The Silent Rifleman. By H. W. Herbert.
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- 76 The Queen's Musketeers. By George Albany.
- 68 The Fighting Trapper. By Capt. J. F. C. Adams.
- 60 Wide Awake, the Robber King. By F. Dumont.
- 32 B'hoys of Yale; or, The Scrapes of Collegians.
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915 Buffalo Bill and the Surgeon-Scout.
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904 Buffalo Bill's Tangled Trail.
900 Buffalo Bill's Fough Riders.
895 Buffalo Bill's Secret Ally.
890 Buffalo Bill's Life-Stake.
882 The Three Bills: Buffalo Bill Wild Bill and Band-box Bill; or, The Bravo in Broadcloth.
874 Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Braves.
869 Buffalo Bill's Road-Agent Round-up.
863 Buffalo Bill's Death Charm.
857 Buffalo Bill's Royal Flush.
851 Buffalo Bill's Double Dilemma.
845 Buffalo Bill's Redskin Ruse.
830 Buffalo Bill's Boys in Blue.
826 Buffalo Bill's Sharp Shooters.
822 Buffalo Bill's Best Bower.
816 Buffalo Bill's Red Trail.
812 Buffalo Bill's Death-Knell.
794 Buffalo Bill's Winning Hand.
787 Buffalo Bill's Dead Shot.
781 Buffalo Bill's Brand.
777 Buffalo Bill's Spy Shadower.
769 Buffalo Bill's Sweepstake.
765 Buffalo Bill's Deceit; or, Silk Ribbon Sam.
761 Buffalo Bill's Mascot.
757 Buffalo Bill's Double.
750 Buffalo Bill's Big Four; or, Custer's Shadow.
743 Buffalo Bill's Flush Hand.
739 Buffalo Bill's Blind; or, The Masked Driver.
735 Buffalo Bill and His Merry Men.
731 Buffalo Bill's Beag es; or, Silk Lasso Sam.
727 Buffalo Bill's Body Guard.
722 Buffalo Bill on the War-path.
716 Buffalo Bill's Scout Shadowers.
710 Buffalo Bill Baffled; or, The Deserter Desperado.
697 Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Brotherhood.
691 Buffalo Bill's Blind Trail; or, Mustang Madge.
667 Buffalo Bill's Swoop; or, The King of the Mines.
658 The Cowboy Clan; or, The Tigress of Texas.
653 Lasso King's League; or, Buck Taylor in Texas.
649 Buffalo Bill's Chief of Cowboys; or, Buck Taylor.
644 Buffalo Bill's Bonanza; or, Silver Circle Knights.
632 Buffalo Bill's Grip; or, Oath Bound to Custer.
629 Buffalo Bill's Pledge; or, The League of Three.
189 Wild Bill's Gold Trail; or, The Desperate Dozen.
175 Wild Bill's Trump Card; or, The Indian Heiress.
Wild Bill, the Pistol Dead Shot.

By Buffalo Bill

- The Ranch King Dead-Shot.
820 White Beaver's Still Hunt.
807 Wild Bill, the Wild West Duelist.
800 Wild Bill, the Dead-Center Shot.
639 Buffalo Bill's Gold King.
599 The Dead Shot Nine; or, My Pard's of the Plains.
414 Red Renard, the Indian Detective.
401 One-Armed Pard; or, Borderland Retribution.
397 The Wizard Brothers; or, White Beaver's Trail.
394 White Beaver, the Exile of the Platte.
319 Wild Bill, the Whirlwind of the West.
304 Texas Jack, the Prairie Rattler.
243 The Pilgrim Sharp; or, The Soldier's Sweetheart.
83 Gold Bullet Sport; or, Knights of the Overland.
152 Death-Trail, the Chief of Scouts.

By Leon Lewis, Ned Buntline, etc.

- 773 Buffalo Bill's Ban; or, Cody to the Rescue.
632 Buffalo Bill's Secret Service Trail.
629 Buffalo Bill's Daring Role; or, Daredeath Dick.
517 Buffalo Bill's First Trail; or, The Express Rider.
158 Buffalo Bill, Chief of Scouts.
117 Buffalo Bill's Strange Pard; or, Dashing Dandy.
92 Buffalo Bill, the Buckskin King.

BY HAROLD PAYNE.

- 883 The Man from Mexico in New York.
872 The King-Pin Shark; or, Thad Burr's Ten Strike.
861 The Tenderloin Big Four.
853 The Quaker City Crook.
844 Tracked to Chicago.
836 The Policy Broker's Blind.
829 The Frisco Sharper's Cool Hand.
821 The Tramp Shadower's Backer.
813 The Sham Spotter's Shrewd Scheme.
806 The Grand Street Gold-Dust Sharper.
798 Detective Burr's Luna is Witness.
792 The Wall Street Sharper's Snap.
784 Thad Burr's Death Drop.
742 Detective Burr Among the New York Thugs.
734 Detective Burr's Foil; or, A Woman's Strategy.
728 Detective Burr, the Headquarters Special.
713 Detective Burr's Spirit Chase.
706 Detective Burr's Seven Clues.
698 Thad Burr, the Invincible; or, The "L" Clue.
690 The Matchless Detective.
680 XX, the Fatal Clew; or, Burr's Master Case.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS.

- 914 Snowflake Sam's Double.
897 The Six-Shot Spotter.
887 The Stranger Sport from Spokane.
873 The Sport Detective's Colorado Clew.
860 The Spangled Sport Shadower.
843 The Crescent City Sport.
832 Gid Gale's Block Game.
804 The King Pin of the Leadville Lions.
786 Chicago Charlie's Diamond Haul.
776 Chicago Charlie, the Columbian Detective.
758 The Wizard King Detective.
723 Teamster Tom, the Boomer Detective.
709 Lodestone Lem, the Champion of Chestnut Burr.
695 Singer Sam, the Pilgrim Detective.
688 River Rustlers; or, the Detective from 'Way Back.
673 Stuttering Sam, the Whitest Sport of Santa Fe.
666 Old Adamant, the Man of Rock.
618 Kansas Karl, the Detective King.
552 Prince Primrose, the Flower of the Flock.
528 Huckleberry, the Foot-Hills Detective.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HOLMES.

- 929 Gentleman George, the Showman Sport.
912 Genteel Joe's Lone Hand.
903 The Train Detective.
896 Kent Keen, the Crook-Crusher.
888 Nightshade in New York.
879 Falcon Flynn, the Flash Detective.
871 The Crook Cashier.
859 Clew-Hawk Keene's Right Bower.
847 Hiram Hawk, the Harlem Detective.
840 Major Bullion, the Boss of the Tigers.
831 Shadowing the London Detective.
817 Plush Velvet, the Prince of Spotters.
803 The Bogus Broker's Right Bower.
788 The Night-Hawk Detective.
779 Silk Ribbon's Cr sh-out.
766 Detective Zach, the Broadway Spotter.
751 The Dark Lantern Detective.
736 The Never-Fail Detective.
724 Captain Hercules, the Strong Arm Detective.
711 Dan Damon, the Gilt-Edge Detective.
701 Silver Steve, the Branded Sport.
694 Gideon Grip, the Secret Shadower.
684 Velvet Van, the Mystery Shadower.
678 The Dude Desperado.
671 Jason Clew, the Silk-Panded Ferret.
664 Monk Morel, the Man-Hunter.
654 Sol Sphinx, the Ferret Detective.
642 Red Pard and Yellow.
608 Silent Sam, the Shadow Sphinx.
592 Captain Sid, the Shasta Ferret.
579 Old Cormorant the Bowery Shadow.
569 Captain Cobra, the Hooded Mystery.
559 Danton, the Shadow Sharp.
550 Silk Hand, the Mohave Ferret.
543 The Magnate Detective.
532 Jack Javert, the Independent Detective.
523 Reynard of Red Jack; or, The Lost Detective.
512 Captain Velvet's Big Stake.
505 Phil Fox, the Genteel Spotter.
496 Richard Redfire, the Two Worlds' Detective.
487 Sunshine Sam, a Chip of the Old Block.
480 Hawkspare, the Man with a Secret.
478 Coldgrip in Deadwood.
460 Captain Coldgrip, the Detective.
453 Captain Coldgrip's Long Trail.
447 Volcano, the Frisco Spy.
441 The California Sharp.
434 Lucifer Lynx, the Wonder Detective.
421 Father Ferret, the Frisco Shadow.
413 Captain Coldgrip in New York.
407 Captain Coldgrip's Nerve; or, Injun Nick.
400 Captain Coldgrip; or, The New York Spotter.
392 The Lost Bonanza; or, The Boot of Silent Hound.
382 The Bonanza Band; or, Dread Don of Cool Clan.
374 Major Blister, the Sport of Two Cities.
365 Keen Kennard, the Shasta Shadow.
352 The Desperate Dozen.
347 Denver Duke, the Man with "Sand."
340 Cool Conrad, the Dakota Detective.
335 Flash Dan, the Nabob; or, Blades of Bowie Bar.
321 California Claude, the Lone Bandit.
294 Broadcloth Burt, the Denver Dandy.
941 The Shadow Sport from Frisco.

BY WILLIAM H. MANNING.

- 948 The Red-Gloved Detective.
931 Frisco Frank at Glory Gulch.
920 The Montana Miner in New York.
908 The Doomsday-Den Detective.
899 The Double-Quick Detective.
893 Yellow Gid, of Dark Divide.
885 The Expert Detective's Shake-up.
875 Trapping the Race Track Judge.
864 The Police Special's Dilemma.
849 The Genteel Sharper's Combine.
841 Graydon's Double Deal.
833 The Sport Detective's Grip.
823 The Athlete Sport About Town.
808 The Crook Detective's Pull.
790 Plunger Pete, the Race Track Detective.
782 Royal Rock, the Round-up Detective.
774 Steve Starr, the Deck Detective.
764 The New York Sharp's Shadower.
738 Detective Claxton, the Record Breaker.
714 Gabe Gall, the Gambler from Great Hump.
703 Spokane Saul, the Samaritan Suspect.
692 Dead Shot Paul, the Deep-Range Explorer.
655 Strawberry Sam, the Man with the Birthmark.
646 Dark John, the Grim Guard.
638 Murdoch, the Dread Detective.
623 Dangerous Dave, the Never-Beaten Detective.
611 Alkali Abe, the Game Chicken from Texas.
596 Rustler Rube; the Round-Up Detective.
585 Dan Dixon's Double.
575 Steady Hand, the Napoleon of Detectives.
563 Wyoming Zeke, the Hotspur of Hontsuckle.
551 Garry Kean, the Man with Backbone.
539 Old Doubledark, the Willy Detective.
531 Saddle-Chief Kit, the Prairie Centaur.
521 Paradise Sam, the Nor'-West Pilot.
513 Texas Tartar, the Man With Nine Lives.
506 Uncle Honest, the Peacemaker of Hornets' Nest.
498 Central Pacific Paul, the Mail Train Spy.
492 Border Bullet, the Prairie Sharpshooter.
486 Kansas Kitten, the Northwest Detective.
479 Gladiator Gabe, the Samson of Sassajack.
470 The Duke of Dakota.
463 Gold Gauntlet, the Gulch Gladiator.
455 Yank Yellowbird, the Tall Hustler of the Hills.
449 Blue Burke, King of the Rockies.
442 Wild West Walt, the Mountain Veteran.
437 Deep Duke; or, The Man of Two Lives.
427 The Rivals of Montana Mill.
415 Hot Heart, the Detective Spy.
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279 The Gold Dragoon, or, California Bloodhound.

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- 797 Pistol Tommy, the Miner Sharp.
785 The Down East Detective in Nevada.
773 Buffalo Bill's Ban; or, Cody to the Rescue.
699 The Cowboy Couriers.
686 The On-the-Wing Detectives.
624 The Submarine Detective; or, The Water Ghouls.
484 Captain Ready, the Red Ransomer.
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901 The Hotel Swell-Sharp; or, The Siren Shadower.
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842 Teton Tom, the Half-Blood.
835 The King-Pin Detective.
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775 King Dandy, the Silver Sport.
753 Gideon's Grip at Babylon Far.
717 Captain Pat McGowen, the Greencoat Detective.
674 Uncle Sun Up, the Born Detective.
670 The Lightweight Detective.
665 The Frisco Detective; or, The Golden Gate Find.
613 Keen Billy, the Sport.
607 Old Benzine, the "Hard Case" Detective.
594 Fire Face, the Silver King's Foe.
583 The Silver Sharp Detective.
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570 The Actress Detective; or, The Invisible Hand.
562 Lone Hand, the Shadow.
520 The Lone Hand on the Caddo.
490 The Lone Hand in Texas.
475 Chin Chin, the Chinese Detective.
465 The Actor Detective.
440 The High Horse of the Pacific.
423 The Lone Hand; or, The Red River Recreants.
408 Doc Grip, the Vendetta of Death.
381 The Gypsy Gentleman; or, Nick Fox, Detective.
376 Black Beards; or, The Rio Grande High Horse.
370 The Dusky Detective; or, Pursued to the End.
363 Crowningshield, the Detective.
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31 The New York Sharp; or, The Flash of Lightning.
27 The Spotter Detective; or, Girls of New York.

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905 Shasta Sam, the Sparkler.
877 Cool Creede, the Dead-Shot.
759 The Sport from St. Louis.
518 Royal Richard, the Thoroughbred.

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